

Family Correspondence of
HERMAN MELVILLE
1830-1904

In The
GANSEVOORT-LANSING COLLECTION



EDITED BY
VICTOR HUGO PALTSITS



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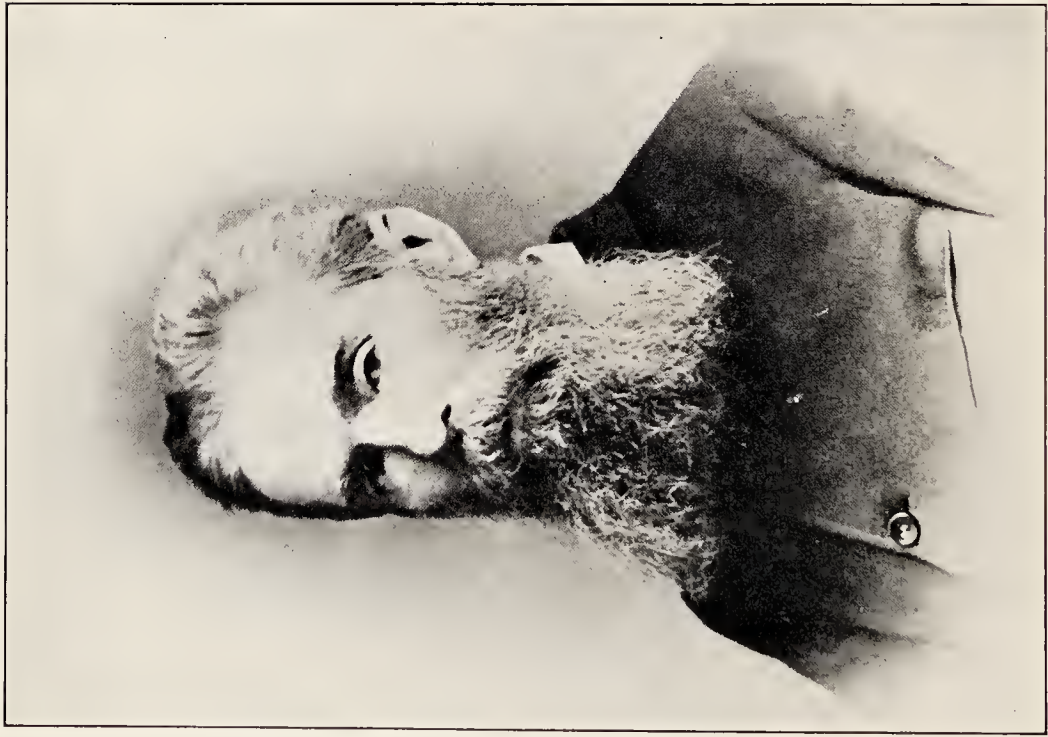
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HERMAN MELVILLE AND HIS WIFE ELIZABETH SHAW MELVILLE
(From cabinet photographs)

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JULY AND AUGUST 1929

PRINTED AT THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY
form p264 [viii-30-29 5c]

FAMILY CORRESPONDENCE OF HERMAN MELVILLE

1830-1904

IN THE GANSEVOORT-LANSING COLLECTION*

EDITED BY
VICTOR HUGO PALTSITS

IT has been said that letters are to biography what State papers are to history. The former interpret personality; the latter reveal the processes of government. But there is variety in correspondence — a variety in unconscious freedom or in conscious restraint. It is in the letters of family and relatives, between whom there is trust and in whom there exists a bond of love flowing strong, and a tie of “blood that is thicker than water,” that the sympathetic biographer finds his finest grist for the interpretation of personality. The collection of letters presented here, culled from the manuscripts in the Gansevoort-Lansing Collection of the Library, are, on the whole, of this human, unrestrained, intimate, social, and often jolly type. They should be read through thoughtfully, analytically, and correlatively.

The language of the original letters has been preserved *verbatim et literatim*. Herman Melville’s handwriting is at times tantalizing. Due to a failing eyesight, yet more to a lack of coördination of his mind and hand, his writing is not easy to read. His words are often incomplete, either in the middle or at the end, and all but ascending and descending strokes are run together or are distorted. It is easier to read his writing and discover intention by surveying much than by word concentration. Where such a condition exists, the editor makes some allowance for intention in his transcriptions. The texts of the letters have been liberally

* The Gansevoort-Lansing Collection was given to The New York Public Library in April, 1919, by Mr. Victor Hugo Paltsits. It had been bequeathed to Mr. Paltsits by the late Mrs. Catherine Gansevoort Lansing, of Albany, N. Y., widow of the Hon. Abraham Lansing, daughter of Peter Gansevoort, and granddaughter of Gen. Peter Gansevoort, Jr., — “to be placed by him in some public library or depository as in his judgment may seem best.” The manuscripts in this collection comprise the military papers of Gen. Peter Gansevoort, Jr. (1749-1812); of his son, Peter Gansevoort; of the latter’s son, Brig.-Gen. Henry Sanford Gansevoort; of the Hon. Abraham Lansing and his wife; of Abraham Yates, Jr.; also the family manuscripts and land papers of the Gansevoort, Lansing, Van Schaick, Melville, and other related families. The books comprise a general collection of literature, art, history, etc., and a collection of Americana, including law and association books of the various lines of the family. — (Editor of the *Bulletin*.)

annotated, as well for their interpretation as for the elucidation of the persons or things referred to in them. The data for these annotations have been largely derived from the Gansevoort-Lansing Collection. The portraits, etc., reproduced are also from the family albums of that collection.

A score or more of Melville's letters to Evert Augustus Duyckinck are also owned by the Library, among the literary correspondence of the Duyckinck Papers. These were liberally used by Meade Minnigerode in 1922.¹

ALLAN MELVILLE TO HIS FATHER

(*Extract*)

New York 20 May 1830

My dear Father²

. . . I shall endeavour to make you a visit about the 4th July, & perhaps bring Allan³ along whom you have not seen — Gansevoort⁴ is looking forward to pass his vacation at Boston with much pleasure, he is becoming a distinguished classical Scholar at the Grammar School, & is at the head of the Class in most of the English studies, but I fear is growing too fast for his health —

Helen Maria⁵ also ranks very high at school, her natural talents are of the first order but like most young Girls she is rather giddy, & wants application, but still she contrives to keep up with the best & is seldom at fault in her lessons — Herman⁶ I think is making more progress than formerly, & without being a bright Scholar, he maintains a respectable standing, & would proceed farther, if he could be induced to study more — being a most amiable & innocent child, I cannot find it in my heart to coerce him, especially as he seems to have chosen Commerce as a favorite pursuit, whose practical activity can well dispense with much book knowledge —

¹ "Some Personal Letters of Herman Melville and a Bibliography." New York, 1922, part I. Reviewed by the present editor in "The Literary Review" of the *Evening Post*, June 9, 1923.

² Thomas Melville, born January 16, 1751, married Priscilla Scollay, a daughter of John and Mercy (Greenleaf) Scollay, of Boston, on August 30, 1774. He is remembered as a member of the Boston Tea Party. There were eleven children by this union and their second son and fourth child was Allan, born April 7, 1782, the father of Herman Melville. Thomas was a son of Allan (b. 1728), who came to America in 1748, and married in 1750 Jean Cargill, who died on August 26, 1759, whilst he died on January 2, 1761. This Allan's father was the Rev. Thomas Melville, son of Thomas, and grandson of Sir John Melvill, who was knighted by James VI and made Baron of Granton on July 28, 1580.

³ Allan's son Allan, born in 1823.

⁴ Allan's son Gansevoort, born in 1816.

⁵ Allan's oldest daughter, born in 1817.

⁶ Allan's son Herman, born in 1819.

Augusta⁷ is all life & motion, but not much of a student, she has however danced herself into notice, for with scarce 2 quarters tuition, she was pronounced by her masters the most elegant Dancer at his last Ball —

So much my dear Father for 4 of your Grandchildren,⁸ the others⁹ are too young to attract attention or disclose character, although Allan has a memory of Brass & is said to have his full share of mother wit — . . .

Your dutiful & affectionate Son

41 Pine Street

Allan Melville

MELVILLE TO PETER GANSEVOORT, OF ALBANY

Pittsfield Dec 31st 1837¹⁰

My Dear Uncle

At my departure from Albany last fall with Robert you expressed a desire that I should write you when my school¹¹ should have gone into operation, — but, when in a few weeks I again returned, you did not repeat your request; still, however, I consider my promise binding — & it is with pleasure that I now proceed to redeem it.

I should have taken up my pen at an earlier day had not the variety & importance of the duties incident to my vocation been so numerous and pressing, that they absorbed a large portion of my time.

But now, having become somewhat acquainted with the routine of buisness, — having established a systim in my mode of instruction, — and being familiar with the charactars & dispositions of my schollars: in short, having brought my school under a proper organization — a few intervals of time are afforded me, which I improve by occasional writting & reading.

My scholars are about thirty in number, of all ages, sizes, ranks, characters, & education; some of them who have attained the ages of eighteen can not do a sum

⁷ Allan's second daughter, born in 1821.

⁸ He described four, though he mentioned five by name.

⁹ The others were Catherine Gansevoort, born in 1825; Frances Priscilla, born in 1827; and Thomas, born in 1830.

¹⁰ Postmarked at Pittsfield, Mass., "Dec. 30." Written to his uncle, the Hon. Peter Gansevoort (b. Dec. 22, 1788; d. Jan. 4, 1876) father of Mrs. Abraham Lansing and brother of Melville's mother.

¹¹ It was a common school in the "Sykes District" under Washington Mountain, where he taught for a term. Melville was a mere youth of eighteen years when he tried his hand at pedagogy, an age equal to that of some of his pupils.

in addition, while others have travelled through the Arithmetic: but with so great swiftness that they can not recognize objects in the road on a second journey: & are about as ignorant of them as though they had never passed that way before.

My school is situated in a remote & secluded part of the town about five miles from the village, and the house at which I am now boarding is a mile and a half from any other tenement whatever — being located on the summit of as savage and lonely a mountain as ever I ascended. The scenery however is most splendid & unusual, embracing an extent of country in the form of an Amphitheatre sweeping around for many miles & encircling a portion of your state in its compass.

The man with whom I am now domicilated is a perfect embodiment of the traits of Yankee character, — being shrewd bold & independant, carrying himself with a genuine republican swagger, as hospitable as “mine host” himself, perfectly free in the expression of his sentiments, and would as soon call you a fool or a scoundrel, if he thought so — as, button up his waistcoat. — He has reared a family of nine boys and three girls, 5 of whom are my pupils — and they all burrow together in the woods — like so many foxes.

The books you presented me (and for which I am very gratefull) I have found of eminent usefulness, particularly John C. Taylors “District School” — an admirable production by the by, which if generally read is calculated to exert a powerful influence and one of the most salutary & beneficial character. —

I have given his work a diligent and attentive perusal: and am studying it, to the same advantage, — which a scholar traveling in a country — peruses its hystory, — being surrounded by the scenes it describes.

I think he has treated his theme in a masterly manner, and displays that thorough knowledge of his subject — which is only to be obtained by Experience.

Had he been perfectly familiar with the circumstances of this school, — the difficultys under which it labours, and in short with every thing pertaining to it, — he could not have sketched it in a more graphic manner, than he has, in his description of the style in which schools of this species are genneraly conducted.

Intimatly am I acquainted with the prevalence of those evils which he alledges to exist in Common-Schools.

Orators may declaim concerning the universally-diffused blessings of education in our Country, and Essayests may exhaust their magazine of adje[ctives] in extolling our systim of common school instruction, — but when reduced to prac-

tise, the high and sanguine hopes excited by its imposing appearance in *theory* — are a little dashed. —

My Taylor has freely pointed out its defects, and has not been deterred from reproving them, by any feelings of delicacy — If he had, he would have proved a traitor to the great cause, in which he is engaged. — But I have almost usurped the province of the Edinburgh Review — so as I am approaching the confines of my sheet I will subscribe myself

Your affectionate nephew

Herman Melville

My love to Aunt Mary,¹²

& a kiss to Henry —¹³

Remember me to Uncle Herman¹⁴

H M

[*Addressed:*]

Peter Gansevoort Esq

Albany

MELVILLE TO HIS SISTER CATHERINE¹⁵

New York, Jan^y 20th 1845

My Dear Sister :

What a charming name is yours — the most engaging I think in our whole family circle. — I dont know how it is precisely, but I have always been very partial to this particular appellative & can not avoid investing the person who bears it, with certain quite captivating attributes ; so, when I hear of Kate Such a one — whether it be Kate Smith or Kate Jones, or Kate Any Body Else I invariably impute to the said Kate all manner of delightful characteristics. — Not, that terms of general admiration will do at all, when applied to the Clan — Kate — for the Kates, D'you see, are a peculiar race, & are distinguished by peculiar attributes — Thus, the Kates as a general rule are decidedly handsome, but if we may not speak of this beauty in terms of unqualified admiration, they still will be found to incline towards good looks, and at any rate, they are never positively ugly. — But, “Fine feathers dont make fine birds” & “Handsome is, that handsome does” & all that sort of thing ; — & so if the Kates were only distinguishable by their

¹² “Aunt Mary” was the first wife of Peter Gansevoort. She was Mary Sanford (b. 1814; d. 1841) whom he married in 1833.

¹³ Henry Sanford Gansevoort (b. 1834; d. 1871), Peter's son.

¹⁴ His mother's brother, Herman Gansevoort.

¹⁵ Catherine Gansevoort Melville, born in 1825, was married to John C. Hoadley on September 15, 1853. She died on January 17, 1905.

beautiful plumage, why, I would not give a fig for a Kate, any more than I would for a Gloriana Arabella Matilda — not I, — for mere beauty is among the least of the manifold merits of the Kates. Besides loveliness of form & face, the Kates are always amiable, with fine feelings, a little too modest at times, but wondrously, always in good humor, sometimes in regular mad-cap spirits, & once in a while (I am sorry to say it) rather given to romping & playing Miss Billy — But then I love them all the better for that, for they romp with such grace & vivacity, that I verily beleive [*sic*] they are more dangerous then, than at other times; tho' to say truth, Kate demure, in a neat little apron & sitting in the corner marking a pockethandkerchi[e]f — for all her hypocritical pretensions — is as murderous a little elf as the biggest of the Tom-Boys — Now, I saw a girl in Broadway yesterday, & I'll lay you a rose-bud her name was Kate — Why, I'm sure of it. — Didn't she have two sweet merry eyes & a round merry face, and a merry smile, & even a kind of a merry little walk — and then it was just as plain as day that she was amiable, kind-hearted, full of sensibility & all that — & it was just as plain that her name was Kate. — But I suppose you laugh & cry Pooh! at my theory of the Kates, & say it is all nonsense, a mere whim, a notion — Well, suppose it is — it is not the less true, & if you deny that, I will adduce an argument in proof, that will fairly make you blush, it is so forcible & to the point, — For, will I not bring your own sweet self in evidence? to prove my doctrine. And, say, Do you not possess all the qualities I have ascribed to this particular class, — & then pray Miss, what is your name but Kate? — Oh, Now! In Heaven's name — Dont look so abashed! What! Face, neck & bosom all bathed in glowing floods of vermillion! — Verily, Modesty is the chiefest attributes of the Kates — Come, Come, up with those drooping eye-lids & that down cast head, and confess that the Kates are better than the Pollies, & you the best of the Kates —

I was overjoyed to hear My Dear Kate (Now, is it not a pretty name) that your visit to Albany has been productive of the most beneficial results to your health — I predicted as much — & knew that when I laid my commands upon your cousin-friend Miss Kate Van Vechten to restore the rose to your cheek, that she would accomplish the behest. — I congratulate you on your recovery, & hope that y[ou] will not permit inattention to diet & exercise to bring on [a] relapse. — I got a long & delightful letter from Augusta¹⁶ the other day — the morning previous to receiving it, I had sent one to her, & could not avoid thinking, when I read her communication, what a poor thing she received in exchange for

¹⁶ Augusta (b. 1821; d. 1882), another sister of Herman Melville.

it. — This morning Gan^{st17} got a letter from Hellen¹⁸ — They are all well. — Ganst is well, & so is the Sergeant, they send much love. — Oh, I want you to find out — but never mind — Now I want you to write me a long letter, dont take pattern after mine & fill it with nonsense, but send me a sober sheet like a good girl

— You know you can put this letter of mine among your things — can't you?
— My respects to all the Van Vechtens.

Your loving brother

[*Addressed :*]

Herman¹⁹

Miss Catherine Melville

Care of Teunis Van Vechten Esq

Nº 11. Montgomery Street.

Albany

GANSEVOORT MELVILLE TO HIS MOTHER

(*Extract*)

Dearest Mother

London November 3rd 1845

. . . I have written Herman a long letter about his Mss,²⁰ I entertain good hopes of its success — If it succeeds it will pave the way for anything he may do in that line hereafter — “le n'est que le premier pas qui conte” — . . .

Your affectionate Son

Gansevoort Melville

GANSEVOORT MELVILLE TO HIS BROTHER ALLAN

(*Extract*)

My dear Allan

London November 18th 1845

2 P. M.

. . . I shall write Herman a note as to “Typee,” in regard to which I am estopped from making any movement until I hear from him again & receive the additional Mss chapters . . .

Your friend & brother

Gansevoort Melville

¹⁷ His older brother Gansevoort, born in 1816, a lawyer who had distinguished himself as an orator in the previous Democratic national campaign, was rewarded with the secretaryship to the American Legation at London, where he died on May 12, 1846.

¹⁸ His older sister, Helen Maria (b. 1817; d. 1887), was married on January 5, 1854, to George Griggs.

¹⁹ Melville had shipped on a whaler for the Pacific in January, 1841, leaving the ship at one of the Marquesas Islands, where he was held in captivity by the savage natives four months. From these adventures in the Typee Valley he escaped on a whaler from Sydney, and ultimately made his way back to the United States on an American frigate, arriving at Boston in October, 1844. One should remember while reading the above jolly letter to his sister so soon after his return from these years of vicissitudes of sailing, that he was now only midway in his twenty-sixth year.

²⁰ The reference is of course to Herman's first novel “Typee.”

GANSEVOORT MELVILLE TO HIS MOTHER

*(Extract)*London December 3rd 1845

Dearest Mother

. . . As you will perceive by my letter to Herman which I snatched time to write while half a dozen persons were talking to me "Typee" is going to have a fair chance for favor in the literary world²¹ . . .

Your dutiful Son

Gansevoort Melville

MELVILLE TO PETER GANSEVOORT

Lansingburgh June 13, 1846

My dear Uncle — Yesterday I received a letter from the Secretary of State — stating that M^r McLane²² was authorised to charge £50 (\$250) to the contingent expences of the Legation for the funeral expences of Gansevoort.²³ — This will cover every thing, & leave enough to bestow some testimonial of an esteem upon Mrs Mansfield, & to remunerate the colored man who tended Gansevoort during his illness. — So that all that matter, I rejoice to think is happily settled. — I have written to M^r McLane & M^r Boyd instructing the latter as to the disposal of the amount which will remain after paying the bills mentioned in his letter to us. — I have also strongly acknowledged our gratitude to both for their many attentions to the deceased.

August Peebles told me yesterday by your request that Mr Pruyn was leaving for Europe — We have nothing to send, as the letters spoken of above were sent by mail. —

I think it more than probable that the P[ri]nce Albert will not arrive before

²¹ Gansevoort Melville wrote in his diary on January 1, 1846, as follows: Was at the Legation — worked till one — then took an omnibus for the Bank, & called on Mr Joshua Bates of the house of Baring, Bros & Co to ask him to discount the note Mr Jno Murray gave me for Herman's Mss, having now 7 mos to run & being for £ 100 — After saying that he knew nothing about Jno Murray, that "it was not in their line," that "it was not his business to discount Jno Murray paper" & more to the same effect, I the meanwhile being quiet, he ended by saying "if you will endorse it & if it should not be pd take it up I'll give you the money at 5%" — I promised, took a dft on Prime Ward & King for the proceeds, thanked Mr Bates & came off.

On January 3d he entered in his diary, among the list of letters he sent that day, one "to Herman covering £5 & informing him of Murray's having purchased his Mss." By January 5th he could make this record: "read 30 or 40 pages of the 64 pp of Herman's forthcoming book which I recd today from Mr Murray."

²² Louis McLane was United States Minister to England in 1845–1846 during the Oregon negotiations.

²³ Gansevoort Melville, secretary to the American Legation, who had recently died in London after a protracted illness. A diary kept by him during the months of his life in 1846, until increasing illness prevented its continuance, will be edited and published by the editor of these letters.

the latter part of next week. — I shall defer my departure for New York until Wednesday P. M. — Of course I shall see you before I go —

Believe me Dear Uncle

Affectionately

Herman

My love to Aunt Susan²⁴ and the children. Mamma & the girls send their love to them.

MELVILLE TO PETER GANSEVOORT

My Dear Uncle

I hear that by the passage of the new Loan Bill a number of additional officers are to be at once created in the Treasury Department at Washington, — I have determined upon going on there, with a view of making an application for one — or, if I do not succeed in this specific object, to express such claims as I have upon some other point.

I have obtained several strong letters from various prominent persons here to the most influential men at the seat of government. And my purpose in writing you is to obtain from you another letter to Gen: Dix, which should be of great service to me. — As I leave here tomorrow, if you will immediately write & enclose the letter to my address at Washington it will reach me there shortly after my arrival.

My best remembrances to my aunt & cousins, and Bel[i]eve me, Very Sincer[e]ly Yours

Herman Melville

New York Feb 3^d '47²⁵

MELVILLE TO PETER AND SUSAN GANSEVOORT

To Uncle Peter and Aunt Susan

Mama & I, on our return towards home from a few days jaunt, arrived at the depot here this morning, intending to greet you and dine with you, and then take the afternoon train for Pittsfield. But as it proved very stormy, we thought that, unless it cleared off, we might stay overnight. At any rate, up *here* we came — you were gone — for which, need we say, we felt much regret. However your

²⁴ Susan Lansing Gansevoort (b. Dec. 12, 1804; d. Oct. 28, 1874). She was Peter's second wife and was married to him on her thirty-ninth birthday, in 1843. She was a daughter of Abraham G. Lansing.

²⁵ On August 5, 1847, he married Elizabeth Knapp Shaw. This letter has interest in showing his endeavor to secure a government post with a fixed income, in anticipation of the responsibilities of a married man.

people have kindly cared for the travelers, so after a pleasant lunch we are off on the afternoon train, spite the storm.

Affectionately yours

Tuesday 18th Sep.²⁶

H. Melville

2½ P. M.

[*Addressed:*] Gen. Peter Gansevoort

MELVILLE TO DIX AND EDWARDS

Gentlemen : —

Pittsfield, March 24th [1856]

Enclosed is copy of agreement, with proofs. —

There seem to have been a suprising profusion of commas in these proofs. I have struck them out pretty much; but hope that some one who understands punctuation better than I do, will give the final hand to it.

Yours truly

Dix & Edwards²⁷

H Melville.

New York

GEORGE GRIGGS²⁸ TO PETER GANSEVOORT

Dear Sir,

Boston Sept 12, 1857

Allan Melville²⁹ Esq gave to Mrs Melville³⁰ last spring a statement respecting the Gansevoort property as it is called at Gansevoort³¹ in which he said that the homestead was conveyed to him (Allan) and his brother Herman by a deed from you in Dec. 1848 — And that there was at the same time a declaration of trust executed by them which has not been recorded — Will you be kind enough to let me know where that declaration of trust is, and if not too much trouble to send me a copy — if it is in your possession or when you can conveniently place your hand upon it — I do not wish to put you to any trouble to get it —

With high regards I am Your Ob^t Ser^t Geo. Griggs

²⁶ Endorsed by Peter Gansevoort: "1855. Sept^r 18 Note left at our House, [in Albany] by Herman Melville in our absence."

²⁷ Publishers, of 321 Broadway, New York City, who issued that same year "The Piazza Tales," printed by Miller and Holman.

²⁸ George Griggs married in 1854 Herman Melville's oldest sister, Helen Maria.

²⁹ A younger brother of Herman (b. 1823; d. 1872). He first married, September 22, 1847, Sophie E. Thurston, and for his second wife, Jane Dempsey, in 1860.

³⁰ Mother of Allan and Herman.

³¹ The country seat at Gansevoort, Saratoga County, New York, was eleven miles northeast from Saratoga Springs. It was built for General Peter Gansevoort, Jr., and was later owned by his son, Herman. It was sold at public auction on September 1, 1888, by James H. Simmons, representing the Hon. Abraham Lansing as executor of the estate of Miss Frances Priscilla Melville, and then bought in by William H. Watson, of Albany.

PETER GANSEVOORT TO GEORGE GRIGGS

*(Draft)*George Griggs Esq^rAlbany 23^d Sept^r 1857

My dear Sir —

On my return from Niagara Falls, I rec^d your note of Sept^r 12, inquiring as to a Declaration of Trust, supposed to have been executed by Allan & Herman Melville at the time (Dec^r 1848) that I conveyed to them by Deed the Homestead occupied by my brother Herman, in Saratoga C^o.

All I know on the subject, is that I made the conveyance to them, with the understanding that a declaration of Trust should be made by them & delivered my sister M^{rs} Melville or my brother — Since that time I have no knowledge of what has been done in relation thereto.

With great Esteem

I am very truly yours &c

HENRY SANFORD GANSEVOORT³² TO HIS FATHER*(Extract)*

My dear Father

Cambridge Nov 23rd 1857

... Next Thursday, Thanksgiving day I am invited to dine at C. J. Shaws. Herman Melville and his wife are expected to be present. He has numerous engagements to lecture in Boston and its vicinity.³³ I understand his subject to be "Roman Statuary." He is able to treat this finely if he will follow "crassa Minerva," but if he aims at metaphysical disquisitions he will surely fail. His forte is narration or description in other words a wild, bold word painting — When he essays philosophy he seeks to ascend by waxen wings from his proper sphere only to find his mind dazzled his wings melted and his fall mortifying —

³² Melville's cousin and son of Hon. Peter Gansevoort. He was born in Albany, December 15, 1834; graduated at Princeton in 1855; attended Harvard Law School in 1857; was in a Buffalo law office in 1859; practiced law in New York City, 1859–1860. At the outbreak of the Civil War he was a private in the Seventh New York Regiment, April, 1861; became a second lieutenant of Battery M, 5th United States Artillery, in December, 1861. He joined the Army of the Potomac in March, 1862, and was promoted to first lieutenant that year. He saw service in the battles of Gainesville, Second Bull Run, South Mountain, and Antietam. In 1864 he became colonel of the 13th N. Y. Regiment Vol. Cavalry, and on October 14th, that year, captured Mosby's camp. In June, 1865, he was brevetted brigadier-general. After the war he was at Fortress Monroe, 1866; at Barancas, Fla., 1867; at Pensacola Harbor, Fla., 1868; at Fort Independence, Boston, 1869–1870, and died from consumption on board the steamer *Drew*, April 12, 1871, while on the Hudson River on his return to Albany from the island of Nassau, whither he had gone some months before in search of restoration of his health.

³³ In this year Melville began a career on the lecture platform, in which he continued until the outbreak of the Civil War. In 1857 he lectured at Concord, Mass., on November 24; at Boston on December 2; at Montreal on December 10, and at New Haven on December 30. The next month took him to places in the States of New York and Ohio.

HENRY SANFORD GANSEVOORT TO HIS FATHER
(*Extract*)

Cambridge Dec 9th 1857

My dear Father,

. . . Yesterday I visited Judge Shaw.³⁴ I there saw Herman Melville. Both desired me to remember them particularly to you. The Judge is the same droll but earnest man as ever. He is indefatigable in business and at the age of eighty³⁵ still presides on the bench and at his table with the same lynx eye and compressed lip as characterised him of yore — Time deals lightly with him only because it cannot deal harshly — It has exhausted its power — Thought cannot plough deeper furrows on his brow. Years cannot whiten hairs on his reverend wig. Time has ceased her further desolation leaving significant tokens of her presence — The soul seems to unite nay defy it to crop, the unknown chasm that seperates [*sic*] the physical from the spiritual. He is somewhat my idea of Hampden in appearance, dogged, determined “dauntless” —

Herman Melville seems considerably improved in health and spirits by his interspersing the spice of variety with the reality of life I met him at Mr Griggs last Sunday evening. He was in a fine flow of humor which I enjoyed exceedingly. There is doubtless positive originality in him, Brilliancy but misanthropy, Genius but less judgement [*sic*]. He evidently mistakes his sphere. He has dropped the pen of candid narration for that of captious criticism. He does the latter well but he can do the former much better. I had the pleasure of listening to his lecture on Statuary in Rome delivered a week since. It was well conceived and executed but it lacked the force and beauty that characterise his early writings

He [*sic* for His] object was to paint to his audience the appearance of Roman Statuary objectively and afterward to speculate upon the emotions and pleasure that appearance is apt to excite in the human breast. The lecture was delivered in Tremont Temple.³⁶ The audience was large and respectable. The hall however is badly planned for acoustics and consequently the speakers voice imperfectly reached its remoter parts. He spoke with animation and effect however — He said that it was a mooted question as to whether objects of art sway with greater power the minds of the educated or uneducated, that a certain something was implanted by heaven in the breast of man which is naturally alive to the beautiful — After alluding to the statues of the country he spoke of the gigantic figures

³⁴ Judge Lemuel Shaw (b. Jan. 9, 1781; d. March 30, 1861), Melville's father-in-law.

³⁵ An error. He was a month under seventy-seven at this time.

³⁶ On December 2.



JUDGE LEMUEL SHAW AND HIS WIFE HOPE SAVAGE SHAW

Parents of Mrs. Herman Melville
(The Judge's portrait by Hunt, in Salem Court House)



which surmounted like storks the pediment of St. John Lantern as a meet company to welcome one to the eternal city — These with their thousand companions in other places in the city abide & mock the human census, the true and abiding population of Rome. The statues at first startle our preconceived opinions. Seneca presents the appearance of a disappointed pawnbroker. Socrates of a comic musique. Caesar of a practical business man. Nero of a fast young man. Plato the aristocratic transcendentalist of a Venetian exquisite. On closer examination however we perceive our former ideas to be correct. The analysis of the marble corresponds with that of the man — The component parts of character are the same now as then. Although the arch dissembler Tiberius wears a sad intellectual countenance still deep attention recalls its sinister lines.

In the Vatican Museum one meets old acquaintances which the historian has introduced to him in times past. The Apollo, the masterpiece of the place seems to respond to those aspirations of beauty and perfection that we only can hope to fully enjoy in another world. It seems to breathe divinity. It awes to silence. The Venus de Medeci is lovely but the Apollo is divine. The Venus seemed to blend the actual & ideal. He had authority for the assertion, as one day from his mat in the Typee valley he saw a maiden surprised in the bath retreating with the grace of nature to a friendly covert. These beautiful figures he contended showed that the violence of the Romans as a conquering race did not engross them wholly. When he stood in the Colliseum its mountain hights of ruins waving foliage & girdling him around as some vast green hollow in the Appenine range, the solitude was that of savage nature, but restoring its shattered terraces and arches he re-peopled them with the statues from the Vatican and in the arenas turfy glen he fancy free confronted the fighting Gladiator from the Louvre with the dying one from the Capitol. Again he heard the ruffian huzzah for the first mingle with the pitiless hiss for the last and felt that more than one in the host around, shared not in the passions of the hour but some hearts felt the horror then as keenly as we would now.

The Laocoon and its kindred class of horrible conceptions and in contrast the pastoral statues was his next topic — The horses of Mt Cavallo, the Moses of Angelo and the Hercules of the Baths of Caracalla were also commented upon. The Roman villas, their statues and style was well treated. He compared the elements of Roman greatness wh. are incorporated into our system of Government and present civilization. The Locomotive and the Laocoon. Our printing press circulating thoughts which they begot and their example which is the basis of our *idea*. The Roman arch entering into & sustain[ing] our architecture and the Roman spirit still animating & supporting Societies and states. The Colliseum

and the Crystal Palace as exponents of our respective characters. Will the glass of the former equal in durability the travertine of the other —

“When falls the Colliseum, Rome shall fall
And when Rome falls, the World” —

I was much pleased. If however he had treated a subject with which his name is connected and in which he would be more at home he would have done better. “The South Seas,” “Oceanica” or a thousand different subjects would have been preferable — Ne scietor ultra crepidam —

Our weather is very changable. Now smiles & then teares . . .

Your ever affectionate son

Peter Gansevoort Esq.
Albany.

Henry Gansevoort

PETER GANSEVOORT TO HIS SON
(*Extract from draft*)

Albany 17 Dec^r 1857

I thank you my beloved Henry for your letter of the 9th rec^d 14th giving an account of Herman Melvilles Lecture delivered in Tremont Temple on Roman Statuary. We were highly delighted by the perusal — Alth^o persuaded he will be a successful Lecturer, I entirely accord with your opinion, that he would be more at home in Narrative than in Criticism — It would be a luxury to hear from him a narrative of his recent tour on the borders of the Mediterranean & Constantinople &c &c³⁷ I am surprized that he has not made his travels the subject of a Lecture to be hereafter woven into a Book,³⁸ which would be not only instructive to others, but very profitable to himself — Such a work would not make a requisition on his imagination

When you again see him make the suggestion . . .

MELVILLE TO PETER GANSEVOORT

My Dear Uncle :

Pittsfield March 15th 1861

It has been suggested to me that I might procure some foreign appointment under the new Administration³⁹ — the consulship at Florence, for example. In

³⁷ The reference is to Melville's tour of the Mediterranean to the Holy Land in 1856.

³⁸ It is interesting to note here that Melville did embody his experiences in the narrative poem “Clarel,” printed at the expense of his uncle Peter in 1876, in two volumes, dedicated to him.

³⁹ This effort to secure a consulship in Lincoln's administration was unsuccessful, as an earlier attempt, in 1853, for a consular post in the South Seas had been frustrated.

many respects such an appointment would be desirable for me, altho' the emoluments are not very considerable. At all events, it is my purpose to apply. And I write for the purpose of enlisting your kind offices, which I know you will cheerfully render, — and also to say, that early next week (perhaps on Monday) I shall leave here for New York, and have thought it advisable to take Albany on my way, for the purpose of seeing & consulting with you, touching my design. — I write in much haste, in order to get this into the mail. I have only time to send love to Aunt Susan & Kitty,⁴⁰ and to say that as ever, I am

Sincerely & affectionately yours

Herman Melville

MELVILLE TO PETER GANSEVOORT

New York March 20th 1861

My Dear Uncle:

Upon inquiring for Mr Weed⁴¹ at the Astor this morning, I find the bird flown back to his perch — Albany.

I have thought it advisable under the circumstances, to address to him a note, which I here enclose to you. Were you as well now, as you will be ere long, I should beg you to deliver the note to him, & urge my suit to him, in person. But as it is, may I ask you to write him a note, enclosing mine? I think you can thus greatly aid me. *But it ought to be done immediately.* A very brief note will answer, so it be *strong & urgent*. I leave here tomorrow for Washington; and letters will reach me there any time during the next ten days.

With love to Aunt Susan and Kitty,

I am, always

Truly & affectionately yours

H Melville

MELVILLE TO PETER GANSEVOORT

Gansevoort Aug. 10th 1861

My Dear Uncle:

Lizzie⁴² and I have been making a visit here for a few days, and we propose returning home on Wednesday, next, taking the early morning train from this place, which reaches Albany about nine o'clock. The interval between that hour

⁴⁰ Mrs. Peter Gansevoort and their daughter, Catherine, afterwards Mrs. Abraham Lansing.

⁴¹ Thurlow Weed.

⁴² Mrs. Melville.

and the departure of the afternoon train East, we propose to spend at your house — that is to say, if you and Aunt Susan will let us.

I am glad to say, that Uncle Herman,⁴³ although feeble, and almost entirely confined to his sofa during the day, is yet, for the most part, free from pain, has a pretty good appetite, and sleeps well. — With love to Aunt Susan and Kitty, Believe me

Truly and affectionately yours
H. Melville

MELVILLE TO PETER GANSEVOORT

Pittsfield, Aug. 15th 1861

My Dear Uncle :

After thinking over it a day or two, I fear that I will not be able, at present, to fix upon a time for a visit to Albany, with Lizzie, as you kindly propose. We were sorry that it so happened, that we necessarily missed seeing you yesterday, in passing through the city.

I write this in some haste to secure the mail. I hope, My Dear Uncle, that you will find good weather, good company, and good wine, where you are. Tell Aunt Susan & Kitty that I wish them a continuation of clear cheeks and sparkling eyes, & that the best way to insure it, is to roll night and morning in the surf at Rockaway. Owing to this sort of exercises, the porpoises, they say, have very fine skin, & enjoy admirable health.

Truly and affectionately thine
H Melville

Peter Gansevoort Esq.

MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT (MRS. LANSING)

My Dear Cousin Kate :

Upon returning from New York I was made happy by finding your note enclosing the pictures. The one of our grandmother⁴⁴ is clear and admirable. But alas for the Hero of Fort Stanwix !

Photographically rendered, he seems under a net of eclipse, emblematic perhaps of the gloom which his spirit may feel in looking down upon this dishonorable epoch. — But dont let us become too earnest. A very bad habit.

⁴³ Herman Gansevoort, brother of Peter Gansevoort and of Herman Melville's mother.

⁴⁴ Catherina Van Schaick (b. 1751; d. 1830), who was married to Col. Peter Gansevoort, Jr., in 1778. The reference is evidently to a photograph made from a painting from life, for which she gave the artist the last sitting in April, 1823.

The other day, be it known unto you, Incomparable Kate, I went with Allan and his wife⁴⁵ to Fort Hamilton, where we saw Lieutenant Henry Gansevoort⁴⁶ of the U. S. Artillery. He politely led us to the ramparts, pointing out all objects of interest. He looked well and war-like, cheerfully embarked in the career of immortality. I saw him upon two other occasions, and dined with him at Allan's one Sunday.

With best remembrances to your mother and father, in which Lizzie joins,
Believe me Incomparable Kate
Affectionately Your Cousin

Pittsfield Feb. 17th 1863⁴⁷

Herman

ELIZABETH SHAW MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT

New York. Jan. 9, 1866.

My dear Kate,

Herman and I thank Aunt Susan very much for her kind invitation to the party on Monday evening — though we shall not be able to comply with it.

Tom is not with us at present, but the letter to him was forwarded at once — Parkersburg, West Va. is his present address —

Accept our best wishes for a "gay time" for you on Monday eve'g, and with our very kind regards to your father and mother believe me affectionately your cousin

Lizzie S. M.

MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT (MRS. LANSING)

Arrowhead, Aug 18th 1868

My Dear Cousin Kate:

Unhappy that I am, I went off without bidding you good-bye.⁴⁸ But my bundles and my luggage, and the catching of the car, with my desire to be "on time" too much engrossed me. However, herein — if you have the faith to perceive — you will find enclosed a cousinly salute, which I entreat you to appropriate.

⁴⁵ Allan and Jane Dempsey Melville, his brother and sister-in-law.

⁴⁶ Henry Sanford Gansevoort.

⁴⁷ Melville sold his Pittsfield home "Arrowhead" to his brother, Allan, in March, 1863, but lingered there until November, when he removed his family to a house on South Street.

⁴⁸ In her diary of 1868, Catherine Gansevoort made these observations:

"Saturday Aug 15th Cousin Herman Melville arrived this A. M. from Gansevoort . . . Herman is so interesting in conversation."

"Sunday Aug 16th This morning Cousin Herman & I went to St. Peter's Ch— & afterwards walked up to St Josephs Ch. up 2^d St to Swan & down Clinton Avenue."

"Monday Aug. 17th Went with Cousin Herman to Genl. Rathbones Garden — It looked lovely . . . Herman left by the 3.50 train for Pittsfield."

Miss Gansevoort was a communicant of St. Peter's, then the principal Protestant Episcopal Church of Albany. St. Joseph's was the principal Roman Catholic Church of the capital city.

I had a very pleasant ride here to Pittsfield, and at the house I found Lizzie and the children, who had arrived a few hours before me, and were well and frisky. Allan's family are all absent for a few days, leaving only Kate to preside. But Kate, like all the Kates, inherits the good old Dutch talent for housekeeping, and takes good care of us.

I hope Uncle Peter enjoyed his afternoon ride yesterday, and was the better for it. My respectful and affectionate remembrances to him, and also Aunt Susan; and say to both that I shall not soon forget my most agreeable visit to Albany, full of diversified pleasure.

The country hereabouts is looking as fresh as — yourself. I was going to say a rose, but chose the more appropriate comparison. However, I must cease this strain, for Lizzie just sat down by me and may catch me at it, and consider that I slightly [as] it may be, exceed the due limits of cousinly compliment. So here is the end of the page, and my note.

Adieu

H. Melville

Lizzie sends her love to all with thanks for the kind invitation.

MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT (MRS. LANSING)

New York Sep^t 9th [1868]

Inimitable Kate :

Thank you for your note. Following it came the photograph. What an imposing mass of masonry. But a critic must needs be fastidious. There appears on the central pediment a sort of dilated sentry-box, which seems to be without due foundation. Look for yourself, and if you agree with me, drop a polite note to the architect, and quote Vitruvius the great classic authority, — though old as our Era, — in architecture, you know.

About the newspaper account of our Cousin Guert,⁴⁹ I have diligently searched my room, but in vain. During my two weeks' absence, the apartment underwent a horrible cleaning & setting-to-rights, which means putting things where one can't find 'em. I will look again, & if successful, you will hear of it.

Concerning Stanny⁵⁰ — tell Uncle Peter that the main reason why he did not stop at Albany was a violent cold, from which he still suffers in a measure. He sends his love to all. As for Lizzy-Ann and the young ladies, I enjoined upon

⁴⁹ Guert Gansevoort, son of Leonard H. and Mary A. (Chadonette) Gansevoort, born in 1812, had died in July, 1868.

⁵⁰ Stanny was Melville's second and now only surviving son, Stanwix, b. 1851.

them not to omit that visit. But Lizzy-Ann⁵¹ is wilful, and I can't make her mind. However, she may obey in this present instance. Best love to Uncle Peter & Aunt Susan. Forget not to remember me kindly to the Lansings.

An so farewell for the time,

Inimitable Katherine

H. Melville

ELIZABETH SHAW MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT

(MRS. LANSING)

(*Extract*)

New York Nov. 10, 1868

My dear Kate,

. . . We were very glad that Uncle was so much benefited by his visit to New York — Herman wished me to say how sorry he was that he was not able to see him either of the times he called —

We thank your father and mother very much for their kind interest in Stanny, and their cordial invitation to him — but at present he would hardly be able to leave his post — he is Allan's only assistant, and being near the close of the year it is a busy time. We consider this position for him merely a temporary one, & hope that he will be able to get something more permanent before many months — his hearing we think is improving under the treatment for catarrhal weakness — and as it is, perhaps he had better give it a fair trial before doing anything else — & he seems to feel much encouraged about it himself — Be assured we most fully value and appreciate your father's & mother's kindness & interest — Stanny would take much pleasure in visiting Albany, & I hope he may at some future time — as I much desire that all the children should be acquainted with their father's relatives as far as possible — . . .

believe me affectionately

Your cousin

Lizzie

⁵¹ Melville's daughter, b. 1853.

ELIZABETH SHAW MELVILLE TO SUSAN (MRS. PETER)
GANSEVOORT

Dear Aunt Susan,

I have been hoping to be able to go and see you, but my persistent neuralgia & weakness have kept me housed since last Thursday — please tell Uncle with my love, that I shall make it my first object when I go out again — I hope you will be in the city for some time yet —

The girls were much disappointed when the rain came down last Saturday, and prevented them from accepting your kind invitation — Herman says he will go with them next Saturday morning & take the chance of finding you in, (or they can go alone) but you must not let it interfere with any other engagements you may have —

If you see Herman, please do not tell him that I said he was *not well* — but if you think he looks well, I hope you will tell him so — If Kate finds herself in our neighborhood, she must look in and see me at any hour.

Hoping that Uncle is improving in health again

believe me affectionately

Oct. 28 [1869]⁵²

104 East 26 St.

Your niece

E. S. Melville

MELVILLE TO HIS MOTHER⁵³

New York, May 5, '70

My Dear Mamma :

As you express a wish in your last letter dated the 2nd inst. to hear from me again before you leave Albany, I accordingly write this ; and that you may be satisfied that I have not been dilatory about the portrait, I will say that I have already had two sittings, and it is getting on.

We have not heard from Stanwix since receiving his London letter in February, but are daily in expectation of one, tho' boy-like he may not think how anxiously we await it.

⁵² The date has been supplied by the aid of Mrs. Abraham Lansing's diary of 1869.

⁵³ This letter was written by Herman Melville to his mother, Maria Gansevoort Melville, and is printed here from a copy made May 15, 1870, by John C. Hoadley.

The other day I visited out of curiosity the GANSEVOORT HOTEL, corner of "Little twelfth Street" and West Street. I bought a paper of tobacco by way of introducing myself : Then I said to the person who served me : "Can you tell me what this word 'Gansevoort' means? is it the name of a man? and if so, who was this Gansevoort?" Thereupon a solemn gentleman at a remote table spoke up : "Sir," said he, putting down his newspaper, "this hotel and the street of the same name are called after a very rich family who in old times owned a great deal of property hereabouts." The dense ignorance of this solemn gentleman, — his knowing nothing of the hero of Fort Stanwix, aroused such an indignation in my breast, that disdaining to enlighten his benighted soul, I left the place without further colloquy. Repairing to the philosophic privacy of the District Office, I then moralized upon the instability of human glory and the evanescence of — many other things.

Lizzie and the girls are well, and for some time past have devoted themselves to the shrine of Fashion, engaged in getting up the unaccountable phenomina and wonderful circumferential illusions which in these extraordinary days invest the figure of lovely woman. — I am called away and must close.

My remembrances to Uncle Peter, Aunt Susan, the superb Kate and the benignant Lansing;⁵⁴ and believe me

Affectionately Your Son,
Herman.

MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT (MRS. LANSING)

104 E. 26th St.⁵⁵

May 29th, [1870?] 4 P. M.

My Dear Kate :

"Cousin Herman and Cousin Lizzie" will be very glad indeed to have you stay with them so long as you please. We shall be a little crowded, but, on these occasions, the more the merrier, you know.

I have just brought mama on from the H. R. R. R. Depot. She told me about your plans for coming down &c, so I hasten to despatch this note.

My affectionate remembrances to Uncle Peter & Aunt Susan.

We shall count on having you with us. Cousin

Herman.

⁵⁴ Abraham Lansing. He was born on February 27, 1835, in Albany; graduated from Albany Boys Academy, 1851; from Williams College, 1855, and from Albany Law School, 1857. He was city attorney of Albany in 1868; became State treasurer in 1874, and in 1876 was corporation counsel of Albany. In 1882 he was a State senator. From 1876 until his death at Albany, on October 4, 1899, he held trusteeships in the Albany Savings Bank, the Albany Boys Academy, the Albany Hospital, the Albany Medical College, etc.

⁵⁵ The residence Melville secured for his family when they removed to the city of New York from Pittsfield.

MELVILLE TO PETER GANSEVOORT

New York, June 12, '70

My Dear Uncle:

On a visit to the Harbor the other day, Tom⁵⁶ handed me a handsomely painted engraving of the Hero of Fort Stanwix,⁵⁷ saying that he was acting upon your request & that I was to regard it as a gift from Uncle Peter. — I write this to offer my acknowledgments for your kindness, and to say how much I prize it.

Tom and his wife are both well, and their place is looking beautifully at this season.

He told me of the proposed visit of Fanny and Cousin Kate. When do they come? I trust that Tom will not wholly imprison them in his Paradise, but will permit the people of 26th St to have a share of their company.

My kindest remembrances to Aunt Susan & Kate, and best regards to the Lansings,

And Believe me

Sincerely yours

H. Melville

MELVILLE TO SUSAN (MRS. PETER) GANSEVOORT

New York Jan. 15, '71.

My Dear Aunt Susan:

When Henry⁵⁸ left here I gave him a note of introduction to Mrs. Gifford, a cousin of Lizzie's now spending the winter at Nassau for her health. She has very kindly written me in reply.

⁵⁶ His brother Capt. Thomas Melville (b. 1830; d. 1883), who was living on Staten Island, as governor of Sailor's Snug Harbor, an honorable post he held sixteen years, until his death. A statue on the grounds, by Randall, was unveiled in his memory on May 30, 1884.

⁵⁷ Colonel Peter Gansevoort, Jr. The fort's correct name was, during Gansevoort's connection with it and after Marinus Willett took command, Fort Schuyler. It had its origin in the last intercolonial war when it was named Fort Stanwix; but during the American Revolution the orderly books, muster rolls, and correspondence of its commanders almost uniformly employ "Fort Schuyler." Colonel Gansevoort was known as "junior," but his son did not use that appellation. Colonel Gansevoort was born in Albany in July, 1749. He was with General Montgomery on the Canadian expedition in 1775; became colonel of the Third New York Regiment of the line in 1776; defended Fort Schuyler against the British invaders under General Barry St. Leger, August 2-22, 1777; was in General Sullivan's expedition of 1779; from March 26, 1781, till the close of the war he was a brigadier-general in the militia of New York. He was made sheriff of Albany in 1790; in 1802 he became military agent of the northern department, and in February, 1809, he was appointed a brigadier-general in the United States army. He died at Albany on July 2, 1812.

⁵⁸ Colonel Henry Sanford Gansevoort, seriously ill, had gone in December, 1870, to the island of Nassau, where he arrived after a five-day voyage. It was soon determined by the family to send his sister, Catherine, to him. She arrived at Nassau on January 16th, and found her brother in the throes of consumption, from which he died on the way home, on April 12, 1871. While they were at Nassau, Abraham Lansing paid them a visit, as shown in her diary of 1871.

I enclose the letter to you. I felt some reluctance in so doing until Allan happened to inform me this evening of Abraham Lansing's leaving here for Havana, and that you had heard so favorable things of Henry from some passenger in the last steamer from Nassau. — I write in much haste to secure the delivery of this at the general Post Office to night.

With very best remembrances to Uncle Peter in which Lizzie & the rest unite

Believe me

Sincerely

H. Melville

MELVILLE TO PETER GANSEVOORT

New York

470 West St.

Day after Christmas, 1871

My dear Uncle :

I write at my office, so you must excuse the paper ; it is the best I happen to have at hand here.

Augusta tells me that during her late visit in Washington Avenue⁵⁹ you kindly enquired after me, asked why I did not come to see you, and also expressed a desire that I should write you.

About not coming to see you. — I am only allowed two weeks' vacation. This I take in the summer ; and last summer I spent it, for a change, at North Conway,⁶⁰ with Lizzie. Had I gone to Northumberland⁶¹ as usual, I should not have failed seeing you on the way, going or returning. During the coming season I hope to have the pleasure of re-visiting Albany.

Yesterday (Christmas) we all dined on Staten Island at Tom's, who gave us a bountiful and luxurious banquet.⁶² It was a big table, belted round by big appetites and bigger hearts, but the biggest of all the hearts was at the head of the table — being big with satisfaction at seeing us enjoying ourselves. Mamma looked

⁵⁹ Residence in Albany of Peter Gansevoort. Augusta was a sister of Melville.

⁶⁰ North Conway, Carroll County, N. H.

⁶¹ Northumberland, Saratoga County, N. Y.

⁶² This Christmas party at Sailor's Snug Harbor, on Staten Island, was a family reunion, the last one with their mother in the circle, for she died soon after. Here were, besides the families of these brothers, their sister Helen Maria and her husband George Griggs, their sister Catherine Gansevoort and her husband John C. Hoadley, and their daughter Charlotte, and other relatives.

uncommonly well; and Helen, Augusta, Kate (two Kates), Fanny, Minnie, Lottie, Frankie, Bessie, Fanny, Stanny, Mr Hoadley, Mr Griggs, not excluding the present modest writer — we all looked well indeed.

Among the toasts Uncle Peter was remembered, Aunt Susan & Cousin Kate; nor was Henry forgotten. Tom offered that toast to his memory.

Stanny and I were obliged to leave at any early or rather early hour, in order to take the last boat for New York. We left them still enjoying themselves in the parlors.

With much love to Aunt Susan⁶³ & sympathy for her illness, and love to Kate,

Believe me

With much respect

Affectionately

Herman Melville

ELIZABETH SHAW MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT
(MRS. LANSING)

New York Jan. 9, 1872

My dear Kate,

I hope you will not measure my appreciation of your kind and most acceptable Christmas gift by my delay in sending you my sincere thanks for it — I do so now most heartily, and I am sure you could not have chosen any thing more to my taste, and sense of comfort — I have cuddled myself up in it these cold mornings, and said as often — it is just what I wanted —

Nothing but press of domestic care at this very busy season has prevented my writing you before, as I have intended to do, day after day —

Augusta, I believe has written you all about the family gathering at Tom's on Christmas Day — It was a pleasant meeting, though it comes at last that these anniversaries bring as much of sadness as gladness, and the places left vacant by the dear ones who have "gone up higher" seem more empty still — And were it not for the sympathy and interest in the young branches who are able to hail these seasons with delight, I for one would almost be glad to let them pass without outward notice —

I was glad to see Mother Melville looking so well and bright — she is certainly a most remarkable old lady — she seemed to have taken much pleasure in her visit

⁶³ Mrs. Peter Gansevoort was suffering then with "a slight attack of Pneumonia & Pleurisy."



HERMAN MELVILLE'S MOTHER AT EIGHTY

to Albany,— Do you not think, dear Kate that you could come down to the city while so many of the family are here? If you would come and stay with us, we should be most happy to have you, and I would do all in my power to make you comfortable — You know you could not come to a quieter house than this, where you might be at liberty to do just as you liked, and I think a change of scene at times is best for all of us — I hope that by this time your dear mother has recovered her health and strength — I was very sorry to hear of her illness both for her sake, and your father's — please tell her so, with my love —

Please give our united love also to your father, and our congratulations that he is so well at this trying season for the strongest — Herman often speaks of him, as we do of you all — And believe me ever affectionately

Your friend and cousin

Lizzie S. M.

ELIZABETH SHAW MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT
(MRS. LANSING)

(*Extract*)

Sailors Snug Harbor
July 17, 1872

My dear Kate

. . . Herman and I expect to go to Pittsfield the first week in Aug. on Sat. the 3^d I think, if we find there is an afternoon train — as his vacation will date from Monday — I am impatient to go, for Jenny has kindly invited the girls to be there at the same time, and I so long to see them again — Stanny is still in Sedgwick, Harvey Co Kansas — where he went first, & he expects to remain there for the present — . . .

Your affectionate cousin

Lizzie

MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT (MRS. LANSING)

106 E. 26 St.

Dec. 9, '72

My Dear Cousin Kate:

Do you know much about the natural history of Angels? Well, there is one variety known by this: in the place where they may have tarried for a time they leave behind them a fragrance as of violets. Another sort, besides bequeathing

the fragrance, leave along with it — what do you think? — Silver soup ladle. — But I must alter my tone. It is a serious business receiving presents, and calls for serious acknowledgments. Well then: cordial thanks to you for your memorial of the Silver Wedding. Lizzie and I will ever think of you at our soup; and I shall always pour out a libation from the tureen to the angelic donor, before helping a mere vulgar broth-bibbing mortal like myself.

And more so for as this is an acknowledgment of your valued gift, it is the earliest I could make with my own hand and eyes. You knew I would not be guilty of the Hottentotishness (word just imported by the Cambria) of a causeless delay. — With affectionate remembrances to my sister Fanny,⁶⁴ Aunt Susan & Uncle Peter, Believe me

Thy loving cousin

Herman

ELIZABETH SHAW MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT
(MRS. LANSING)

Boston Dec. 10 1872

Dear Kate,

I was about writing you when I read your letter, and am glad to have yours to reply to — Herman wrote me about the beautiful soup ladle that you presented us with, and I beg you will accept my hearty thanks for your memorial of the wedding anniversary — I think now, there must have been some collusion between you and the young people, or you would not have known so exactly what I wanted in that line — and now can understand why Bessie protested so earnestly against my taking the ladles to Boston to be marked! What a disclosure there would have been, had I missed one of them! I am glad if you had a pleasant visit in New York — you know, if you will take us just as we are we are always glad to have you come, and you have only to write and let us know at any time when you would like to visit us —

Thy pie came along safely in my trunk, owing to my judicious packing! — it was only a little flattened, and it was pronounced *very nice by all* — though you would have been amused to see my brothers look askance at *any thing* in the place of one of “mother’s pies” on the table — I expect to return the last of this week, or early in next — The fire is the all absorbing topic, and friends on every side have met with losses greater or less — I have plenty to keep me company — but I feel so much relieved by your father’s kind and generous gift to Herman (removing the necessity of renting our house or part of it, which I feared) that I

⁶⁴ Frances Priscilla, born in 1827; died in 1885.

can bear my loss with equanimity — I say *I*, because Herman from his studious habits and tastes being unfitted for practical matters, all the *financial* management falls upon me — and one cannot make bricks without straw — you know — Mother and my brothers feel much relieved on my account — they beg to be kindly remembered —

With my very kind love to your father & mother believe me ever affectionately

Your friend and cousin

Lizzie

ELIZABETH SHAW MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT
(MRS. LANSING)
(*Extract*)

New York May 26, 1873

My dear Kate,

The parcel by express came safely to hand on Saturday, and we thank you very much for your thoughtful kindness — The coat fits Herman very well I think, though it is a little snugger than the loose sacks he is accustomed to wear — His figure, and Henry's⁶⁵ were very similar — At Boston they constantly noticed how much they were alike in various ways — but *mainly*, in figure and carriage — . . .

We are also very busy here, the girls are getting ready to go to Boston somewhat earlier this year — to be in Cambridge on Class Day — My brother's son graduates, and a "good time" is expected — The pique skirt comes in very opportunely — we are dressmaking with all our might, as usual "on our own hook" — and are independent of dressmakers and their frightful charges with the exception of an occasional "cut and baste" — I do not expect to go away till Herman has his vacation, probably the last of July or August, and we shall be very happy to see you here any day agreeable to yourself, for as long a visit as you can give us — you have only to write us a day or two beforehand, & let us know the day and train — Herman is quite well again now — you heard through Augusta, of his sudden & severe illness — and also of Stanny's going to California — We all thought he was foolish to give up his place, especially as the Dr. was desirous to keep him, but he seems to be possessed with a demon of *restlessness*, and there is nothing to do but let him go — . . . With much love to Uncle and Aunt Susan from us all, believe me affectionately

Yr cousin

Lizzie

⁶⁵ Henry Sanford Gansevoort, deceased.

ELIZABETH SHAW MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT
(MRS. LANSING)
(*Extract*)

New York July 2^d 1873

My dear Kate —

. . . I miss you very much and wish you were here to help me get along with this dreary time without the children — When Herman is gone all day, or the largest part of it, the house seems utterly desolate — it is quite a new sensation for me to have the days seem *long* — We are counting the days for going to Pittsfield and think with longings of the refreshing breezes from the hill-tops — We would like very much indeed to meet your father & mother and you at Cattskill, if it were possible — but fear that it will not be in our power to do so — . . . Herman sends his love, and wishes to know if you have succeeded in getting the book you wished — if not to let him know, and he will get it for you —

He joins me also in kind love to Uncle, and Aunt Susan and, with our kind remembrances to Mr Lansing, believe me affectionately

Yr Cousin

Lizzie

ELIZABETH SHAW MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT
(MRS. LANSING)
(*Extract*)

New York July 18th 1873

My dear Kate,

. . . Herman and I are counting the days before we go to Pittsfield — and hope to leave on Saturday of next week — the 26th . . . accept the ever affectionate remembrances of your friend & cousin

Lizzie

ELIZABETH SHAW MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT
(MRS. LANSING)
(*Extract*)

Dear Kate,

. . . We expect to go to Pittsfield next Saturday, the 26th . . . the house will be closed for the two weeks that Herman expects to be absent . . . With much love to your father & mother, in which Herman joins, believe me affectionately your cousin

New York — July 20 [1873]

Lizzie

ELIZABETH SHAW MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT
(MRS. LANSING)*(Extract)*

49 Mt. Vernon St.

Boston Aug. 15. 1873

Dear Kate,

. . . Herman and I had a *delightful* visit in Pittsfield and — have you heard the news? — it has happened since I left — Maria is engaged to young Mr. Morewood — Willie, as we always call him — we have known him from infancy, and feel sure that his character and standing are such as to make the match a very suitable one —

He is a young man of most excellent principles and a good heart — has been a most affectionate & devoted son and brother and every one who *knows* him well thinks well of him — He has been in successful mercantile business in New York for some years, with “something to the fore” besides — the mutual attachment is based upon a long tried *friendship* which is the best ground for married happiness — and I think it is a good move for not only Milie, but also for her sisters — for he will be a kind protector for all of them — and they all appreciate his brotherly kindness — Herman was there a few days ago *after* I left, (as I wanted to see Bessie *here* before she went home) and Willie took that opportunity to talk with him and have it settled — He approves of it very much —

So the young people are likely to “have a wedding in the family” as they wished and Kitty will “have a brother-in-law” at last, as *she* longed for — Fanny, (my Fanny) came to Pittsfield before we left, and is there still — Herman and Bessie are in New York, & she has a young friend to keep her company — . . .

Our visit to Arrowhead did us both much good — and I wish you could go there and see how delightful it is — We spent nearly all the time walking, or driving, or sitting out doors — and it seemed as if we could not get enough of the reviving air, after being nearly suffocated in the heat and *smell* of New York — The girls get along admirably and the place looks as neat as a pin — With their aunt’s family “over the way” — they have both protection and company and all goes on well — . . .

believe me affectionately

Your cousin

Lizzie

ELIZABETH SHAW MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT
(MRS. LANSING)

(*Extract*)

New York Nov. 23 1873

Thank you dear Kate ever so much for your very kind and pressing invitations to us for the wedding⁶⁶ We will accept it for Bessie — Tom & Kate will take her with them — & leave her at your house — Herman cannot leave his post at this very pressing time of business — He sends his very best wishes for you, & would like to give them in person if it were possible — For me, dear Kate, you know how much pleasure it would give me to be present on “the occasion,” but I have had such very earnest desires expressed that I should be with the family at Thanksgiving, at Boston — that I have decided to go *there* — You know it is the grand high hearth stone festival of us New Englanders, and in these times of change, we feel that every meeting *may* be the last one, and I think I ought to join them, mother desires it so much — If there were one day between the two occasions, I might go to Boston via Albany, but in view of the *dinner* party, and the evening gathering on the 27th, the fatigue of a nights travel, after the ride to Albany would be too much for me — Be assured, I most fully appreciate your kind & generous proposition — . . . Again accept my heartfelt good wishes for your future, & with kind remembrances to Mr. Lansing, believe me

Your affectionate Cousin

Lizzie

ELIZABETH SHAW MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT
LANSING

(*Extract*)

New York June 7, 1875

My dear Kate,

. . . I wanted to tell you that we are expecting Stanny home in a short time — A very favorable opening for his going back to his old business, *mechanical* dentistry offered itself, and since he [had] not got settled at anything in California, and had undergone a very marked change in his ideas and purposes, born of his own experience (which is the best teacher) we thought he would be very glad to come home and settle himself & we sent for him and he will do well now, we have every reason to believe since he feels himself how foolish he has been to give up a good home — His old friend, Fred Starr has succeeded to his father's practice, and he wants just such an assistant as he knows Stanny can be, and will set him at work at once — & put him in a fair way to earn a handsome living —

⁶⁶ The reference is to the marriage of Catherine Gansevoort to Abraham Lansing, at Albany.

We think he will be home about the 24th of June — He naturally feels some compunctions about coming back no better off in fortunes than when he left, & fears his friends may look coldly on him — but I told him I should say, and I want it to be distinctly understood that *we sent for him* — I wanted also to ask you dear Kate, if you would have any objection to my giving Stanny to wear, the coat that belonged to your dear brother, that you remember you sent Herman some time ago⁶⁷ — it did not fit him very well, so it has remained in my woolen chest — If you have, do not be backward to say so to me — I shall well understand it — but if not, please let me know, as I am getting together something for him to wear, as I suppose he will be quite out in the wardrobe way, on his arrival in civilized parts — We shall all be so glad to have him home and satisfied to stay, and he, poor fellow, is overjoyed at the thought of coming —

With kindest regards to your husband believe me ever

Your attached cousin

Lizzie

MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT LANSING

Gansevoort, Aug. — '75

Cousin Kate:

Lounging on the sofa after dinner just now in the parlor which was my mother's, my eye chanced to fall on a photograph of Henry in a gilt frame hanging under mother's portrait. I took it down & brought it to the window, & looked at it. —

Now let me say, that the engraving you showed me of Henry, meant for the book, is detestable.⁶⁸ Also, I have seen other pictures, claiming to be he, which do not look like him, and are a caricature of him. The picture for the book is the one that I referred to at the outset. It is he, and is not bad-looking, and it has character. —

Michael, the angel of truth, inspired me to write this to you on the instant. — Take it for what its worth, and so good bye.

H Melville

— P. S. Since writing the foregoing Fanny tells me that Mr Hoadley much dislikes the engraving. There's confirmation. — Stop tinkering, and do the right thing, I pray you, and impute to the right motive my outspokenness.

H. M.

⁶⁷ See Mrs. Melville's letter of May 26, 1873.

⁶⁸ Mrs. Lansing was engaged with the life of her brother, Colonel Henry Sanford Gansevoort, prepared by John C. Hoadley, husband of her cousin, Catherine Gansevoort Melville, Herman's sister.

MELVILLE TO ABRAHAM LANSING

New York, Aug 5, '75

My Dear M^r Lansing :

I have just received your note of yesterday. I thank you for the prospective welcome. But as for meeting me on the wharf — dont mention it. When the Shah of Persia or the Great Khan of Tartary come to Albany by the night-boat — *him* meet on the wharf and with salvoes of artillery — but not a Custom House Inspector.

I should have mentioned in my note to Kate that I should not appear upon the scene till some time after breakfast — since on Sunday morning my appetite will be clamorous at an hour too early for any rational household to satisfy. As for my plunder or impedimenta, I shall carry nothing but what I take in my hand.

Looking forward with pleasure to meeting you all

I remain

Truly yours

H. Melville

MELVILLE TO ABRAHAM LANSING

New York, Aug. 26, '75

My Dear Mr. Lansing :

I received your note last night, enclosing the dr[a]ft. — Herewith is a note for my uncle,⁶⁹ which you — or Cousin Kate will be kind enough to read to him; or seal and deliver; you know best.

Thanking you again — and, through you, Cousin Kate — for your great hospitality and kindness to me during my Albany visit

Believe me

Sincerely yours

H Melville

⁶⁹ The reference is no doubt to payment from his uncle Peter Gansevoort for the printing of "Clarel," and Melville's letter of thanks. Peter Gansevoort was born at Albany, December 22, 1788; graduated at the College of New Jersey, 1808; received there M.A., 1811; studied law at Litchfield, Conn., and at Albany; admitted to bar in 1811; was private secretary to De Witt Clinton, 1817-1819; judge advocate general of the State of New York, 1819-1821; member of assembly, 1830-1831; in State senate, 1833-1836; first judge of court of common pleas, 1843-1847. He was a trustee of Albany Academy, 1826-1876, and chairman of its board of trustees, 1856-1876. In 1812 he succeeded his father as a director in the New York State Bank, in which office he continued until his death, on January 4, 1876. He married first, in 1833, Mary Sanford, by whom he had Henry Sanford and Catherine; and second, Susan Lansing, whom he married in 1843.



House and Garden 112 Washington Avenue

August 1867

Albany, New York

GANSEVOORT-LANSING HOUSE AND GARDEN AT ALBANY, NEW YORK
(Photographs by Haines, August, 1867)

MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT LANSING

104 E. 26 [St.]

Oct. 8, '75

Cousin Kate: — By all means. Send it down at once. — I am glad you were pleased with that book of the sainted queen.⁷⁰ — My best love to my sister Kate, and Fanny, and say that they both must come down & see us before leaving for the East. —

My affectionate regards to your father and Abraham.

Lizzie is writing you, I think; so she will send remembrances for herself.

Thy Cousin

Herman

ELIZABETH SHAW MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT LANSING

New York Feb. 2, 1876

Dear Kate,

I have just received Fanny's letter and hasten to reply that I am sorry it so happens just now that we cannot receive any visitor — not even Augusta and Fanny — The book is going through the press, and every minute of Herman's time and mine is devoted to it — the mere mechanical work of reading proof &c is so great and absorbing — You know dear Kate, how happy Herman and I always are to have you come here freely, and make yourself perfectly at home, and will I am sure understand the exigency of seeming want of hospitality at this time — Just as soon as the stress is over, I will let you know & then hope you will come down and make us a good visit — We were so sorry to hear that Augusta is ill, & hope that Fanny's good nursing will soon set her right again —

Herman sends love and so do we all —

Ever your affectionate cousin

Please remember us all to your husband

Lizzie

[*Enclosure of February 2, 1876*]

Dear Kate,

I have written you a note that Herman could see, as he wished, but want you to know how painful it is for me to write it, and also to have to give the real cause — The fact is, that Herman, poor fellow, is in such a frightfully nervous state, & particularly now with such an added strain on his mind, that I am actually *afraid*

⁷⁰ Referring to an inscribed copy from Melville to Mrs. Lansing of "The Life of St. Elizabeth, of Hungary," by Montalembert, translated by Mary Hackett (New York, 1870), in the Gansevoort-Lansing Collection.

to have any one here for fear that he will be upset entirely, & not be able to go on with the printing — He was not willing to have even his own sisters here, and I had to write Augusta before she left Albany to that effect — that was the reason she changed her plan, and went to Tom's — If ever this dreadful *incubus* of a *book* (I call it so because it has undermined all our happiness) gets off Herman's shoulders I do hope he may be in better mental health — but at present I have reason to feel the gravest concern & anxiety about it — to put it in mild phrase — please do not speak of it — you know how such things are exaggerated — & I will tell you more when I see you — which I hope will be before long — you know how I enjoy your visits — And I count on your affection for us, not to say your good sense, to take this as you should & in no wise feel hurt at it — Rather pity & pray for your ever affectionate cousin

Lizzie.

ELIZABETH SHAW MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT
LANSING
(*Extract*)

New York Apl 22 1876

My dear Kate,

I write a line to remind you that another week will bring along the first of May, when I trust you will be at liberty to make us your promised visit —

Congratulate us that the book is *at last*, in type, to the last page of Ms. and a few days more will finish up the *plate-printing* and the various little odds and ends of the work — Herman has consented on the *very strong* representations of the publishers, to put his name on the title-page, for which I am very glad — and *therefore* he has changed his mind about having a dedication — Now, he wants me to tell you he is going to inscribe that book in your father's name, as seems most natural and fit — I have been all along in strong hopes that he would, but he seemed averse to having *any* dedication whatever or any name on the title page — I shall be so thankful when it is all finished and off of his mind, and cannot help hoping that his health will improve when he is released from this long continued mental strain — . . .

We are getting quite anxious to hear of Helen & Fanny — How could any one be so *mean* and *heartless*, as to disturb that house at Gansevoort — the very silence and repose of which, just as poor Augusta left it, would seem to make it almost sacred — Most of all, my heart aches for poor Fanny — how will she ever bear the desolation & *change* that is now brought to her — Thank Heaven for

Divine Help — surely it cannot fail us — and how could we endure life without that strong assurance within us —

Do write soon — the girls are well, & send love — Herman sends kindest remembrances to yourself and husband —

Affectionately your friend & cousin

Lizzie S. M.

ELIZABETH SHAW MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT
LANSING

(*Extract*)

New York June 4 1876

Dear Kate,

Congratulate us, for the *book*⁷¹ was published yesterday after a series of the most vexatious delays — I have only been waiting to reply to your note, to be able to say this — Herman will write you and *I hope*, send you a copy — (or perhaps he will by-and-by if he does not now) for I know you would value it —

His ring came from Tiffany's — all nicely marked, and he wears it frequently — the seal (wax) was not returned with it — I hope they have it safe — . . .

We all send love to you and Cousin Abe —

Affectionately your cousin

Lizzie

MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT LANSING

104 E. 26th St.

June 5, '76.

Aside from your special object in writing it, you do not know how deeply I felt the sincere tone of your note to me, Cousin Kate.

You repeat, and with added emphasis, what you verbally said to me at the depot here last April, as to carrying out your father's intention:⁷² I appreciate your fidelity, my cousin. — But though the matter is not yet developed into a clear statement rendered; I think now, as before, that nothing more is necessary. — When are we to see you here next? Come down before the heat fairly begins. — Tom & Kate dined with us yesterday.

Lizzie & the girls are well, and unite in love to you and Abe. Me too remember to him, and warmly. — And now — with my heart upbraiding me for writing so cold a response to so cousinly a note as yours — I hasten to end the sheet — and let it be with a benediction: —

God bless you!

H : Melville

⁷¹ The publication date of "Clarel."

⁷² Completion of the payment of cost for printing "Clarel."

ELIZABETH SHAW MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT
LANSING

(*Extract*)

New York June 6th 1876

Dear Kate,

Herman and I both wrote you yesterday, so your note, rec'd this morning just crossed our letters —

We shall be very glad to see you on the 15th or before as is convenient to you and you must at least, pass all the time of Abe's absence with us — If Fanny is with you of course she will come too — Then perhaps Cousin Abe will come for you on his return —

The name of the book, I enclose, and am sorry I omitted it yesterday — Should have written you before but wanted to be able to say the book *was* published —

I should have enclosed this in Fanny's, but she had her letter sealed up before yours came —

As soon as you see the book, let us know how you like the dedication — and if you do not think it what would have been pleasing to your dear father — How I wish he could have lived to hold the volumes in his hand! — . . .

All unite in love — affectionately yr friend & cousin

Lizzie S. M.

ELIZABETH SHAW MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT
LANSING

(*Extract*)

New York — June 21st [1876]

Dear Kate,

. . . Bessie & Fanny and I are to go to the mountains, 1st Aug. through my good brother Lem's kind provision — and I am trying to arrange for comfortable quarters for Herman during our absence, so as to shut up the house — I think the change will benefit him also — take him out of himself —

Thanks for yours of 14th We are glad you like the inscription⁷³ in the book —
Kindest regards to Cousin Abe

your Cousin

Lizzie

MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT LANSING

104 E. 26 St.

July 25, '76

Cousin Kate :

You have made such earnest assurances to me in reference to that book of mine,⁷⁴ and in connection with what, you tell me, were your father's expressed

⁷³ The dedication of "Clarel."

⁷⁴ "Clarel."

wishes, that I can not doubt your sincerity. And so I make the following statement to you :

As it turned out, the 1200 covered the printing expenses, with a fraction to spare. But the supplementary charges — not long ago brought to my attention — against the account of the book — advertizing &c, and customary copies distributed for advertising purposes — will make a difference with me in any receipts to come, of about one hundred dollars.

Whether this comes within the scope of Uncle Peter's design or not, I do not venture to determine. But enough. —

Lizzie got your note yesterday. I thank you again for your repeated invitation to come up & spend some Sunday with you. I should be most happy so to do if practicable.

Lizzie & Fanny (Fanny the Little)⁷⁵ are busily completing their arrangements for the White mountain campaign. — Lizzie and I went to see Tom at the island⁷⁶ the other day (starting in 5 P. M. boat, & returning on 9 P. M. Quarantine) Found Tom & Kate well. — How tragical a thing that oversetting of the yacht. We passed the wreck in the boat — the two masts projecting from the water. —

My kindest remembrances to Abraham. — O, Fanny⁷⁷ is with you — my love to her, & say I hope to see her yet ere she leaves you. — And now, accept this note in testimony that as regards your cousinly interest in me I am neither insensible nor incredulous.

Herman.

[*In the margin by Mrs. Lansing:*] Ans'd July 31st 1876 enclosing check for \$100.⁰⁰

CATHERINE GANSEVOORT LANSING TO MELVILLE⁷⁸

[Albany, July 31, 1876]

Cousin H.

Herewith I send a check to meet the balance due for Clarel's publication.

I beg you to receive it as a contribution of my father's to that object. He desired it, & for that reason I am the more earnest in having his wishes fulfilled.

The check which went to the Society for Ruptured & Crippled stands in my name. I hope Mr Oliver Swan did not take it with him.

⁷⁵ Herman's daughter, Frances, born in 1855, who became in 1880 the wife of Henry B. Thomas.

⁷⁶ Sailor's Snug Harbor on Staten Island.

⁷⁷ His sister, Frances Priscilla.

⁷⁸ Fragment of a draft in the handwriting of Abraham Lansing, with a few words by Mrs. Lansing.

MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT LANSING

Aug. 2, '76.

507 West St.

Cousin Kate :

The postman has just handed me yours of July 31 enclosing check for the \$100; and, while the first impulse stirs me, I square round to my desk to tell you — however briefly — how deeply I feel the frank and affectionate spirit which penetrates it. I wont say anything more — only this: that I heartily reciprocate your wish that we may always be true and sincere friends. Amen!

My best love to my sister Fanny, and kindest remembrance to Abraham.

And Believe me

My Dear Cousin Kate,

Always faithful

H. Melville

MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT LANSING

104 E 26 [St.]

Aug. 27. — P. M. [1876]

Dear Cousin Kate :

It was you that charged me with that commission touching the venerable Chaucer; it is to you therefore that I now address this note.

Passing thro' Nassau St.⁷⁹ to-day I chanced upon a good set of the poet, at a very moderate price — (\$4.) and, as these things are fugitive, I snapped it up immediately, and ordered it to be sent by express to 115 Wash. Ave. Albany. — What with his other volumes Chaucerian, Abraham will now have quite a variorum library of the old poet who didn't know how to spell, as Artemas Ward said.

I arrived in N. Y. this morning by Fall River R[oute] from Boston on my way from White Mountains. Lizzie & the girls are jolly. Helen, also I saw — & also Mr Griggs — at Brookline are well & jovial. I myself am ever hilarious, & pray sincerely that you & Abraham may likewise ever be so.

Your affectionate cousin

Herman

To Abraham: I have been thinking of what you said about changing the name of the Hotel.⁸⁰ — I think that "*The Fort Stanwix Hotel*" is the right thing. You

⁷⁹ Nassau Street was at this period the principal center in New York City for secondhand books.

⁸⁰ This hostelry on Broadway, Albany, near Union Depot, continued to be owned by the family until sold after Mrs. Lansing's death by her executors to liquidate her benefactions, which were numerous. Stanwix Hall was erected in 1832-1833 for Herman and Peter Gansevoort from plans by Homer Preston; Martin and Morey were the master builders, and Samuel Pratt was the master mason. Alterations to it were made in 1877. The site had been in the family since its purchase by Harne Gansevoort in March, 1677.

need a change. Besides, "Stanwix Hall" is indefinite — it may (in the opinion of strangers) mean anything or nothing; but the prefix "*Fort*" fixes it, and provokes a question; and the answer is at hand. Then the late celebrations of the Centennial year are auspicious, and make the new title appropriate and popular. — See if Kate don't agree with me.

Final P. S. — "*Fort Stanwix Hotel*." That is genuine, historic, natural, and purely American. It avoids the snobbish imitation of English names to our N. Y. Hotels. It sets a good example. It is the thing.

MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT LANSING

N. Y. 507 West St.

Sep. 8 [1876]

Cousin Kate:

Your note reached me yesterday in the midst of a jumping tooth-ache, which, spite remedies, still clings, tho' now with merciful intimations of letting me off ere long. Nevertheless with one hand to my "jole," with the other I indite this note. — About the Chaucer: I infer that Abraham does not wish to pay the "Scribner" price for the book. Well then, I will keep a look out for a fair copy at the Nassau St prices, & secure it, if I find it. How much it will be, depends upon the seller &c. Should I not succeed in lighting on a copy such as I speak of, before your visit to us in October — then we three — yourself, Abraham & your humble servant — will take council together touching the matter and doubtless hit upon some wise decision. —

About the pears. Many thanks for your kind intimation. Should your purpose hold, and your pear-harvest admit of the gift without robbery to yourself — you had better defer sending them till Lizzie's return which will be — tho' no day is determined on — some time about the latter part of the month. — Lizzie & the girls have been greatly benefited by the mountain air — entirely excepting the annual cold, &c. — I am glad you chanced to mention incidentally the present whereabouts of Fanny & Helen,⁸¹ as I purpose a letter to Fanny & hardly knew where precisely she was. — And so, cousin Kate,

I remain always

Affectionately

Herman

⁸¹ His sisters Frances Priscilla and Helen Maria.

MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT LANSING

New York, Sep. 13, '76

My Dear Cousin Kate :

Your kind note of the 10th announcing the plums, was received on Monday. Last night (Tuesday) the first arrived all right in 25th St, giving great pleasure to the Misses Hartnett, and furnishing to me an added example of your cousinly good feeling. Edwin, with Mr Brewster dined with us (at the Misses Hartnett's) last evening, and spent the remainder of it with me in my room at 26th St. I was well pleased to see him again, & looking so well. — About the enclosed slip. You perceive that you have become a contributor, and in some degree, a privileged one, to an excellent Charity. — You pause, methinks, and say —

“Pray, explain yourself.” —

Well then — and for sweet charity's sake dont take offence — I have upon consideration determined that as touching the provision for the publication of “Clarel,” it is best to restrict myself to what Uncle Peter so kindly presented me with in person, as I may say. By your subsequent supplemental act you faithfully carried out what, as you averred, was your father's directions or wishes : you are irreproachable there ; and anything that I can do or have now done, does not and can not revoke that affectionate act of yours, while yet *my* action operates in a way favorable to the unembarrassed freedom of mutual good will. (Rather “*tall writing*,” that last clause). — Well ; but you take nothing back — you receive nothing back — but are *forced* to acquiesce in the step I have taken. The result of all is — the benefit of suffering humanity. Let us therefore, my Dear Cousin, congratulate ourselves all round — you, me, and the poor cripples, and say no more about it. —

Lizzie & the girls are coming home next Monday. We completely expect you to visit us on your way to the Centennial — you and Abraham. Dont forget it. Arms of welcome will be extended to you. — And now, believe me always faithfully & affectionately and devoutly

Your Cousin

Herman

P. S. I send by same mail the last report of the Society, which, I know, will be interesting to you.

CATHERINE GANSEVOORT LANSING TO MELVILLE

Dear Cousin Herman

Your letter of 13th inst rec'd, as well as the enclosed receipt for the 100 Dollar Contribution to the N. Y. Society for the relief of the Ruptured & Crippled. I

should have been glad to have you allow Papa to pay the whole expense of "Clarel," but as you have thought best to assume part you[r]self I thank you for the gift you have bestowed on me, in giving me, the credit for your own "sweet charity" to the destitute & suffering. May it do good & give Comfort to those unfortunates for whose good it has been bestowed, &c &c

[Unsigned⁸²]

Sunday afternoon

Sept. 17th 1876

Albany, N. Y.

ELIZABETH SHAW MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT
LANSING
(*Extract*)

New York Sept 21, 1876

My dear Kate,

. . . Herman tells me that you and Cousin Abe think of going to the Centennial before long and that he has asked you to stop on your way, and make us a visit — We all "second that motion" and hope you will . . .

We all send much love & hope to hear from you soon about coming to N. Y.

Affectionately your Cousin

Lizzie

MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT LANSING

New York

104 E. 26 St.

Sep. 26, '76

Cousin Kate:

I was glad to get your note of the 17th, and was much gratified with the tone of it. By the way — your rainy Sunday was also experienced by me, alone here as it chanced, to chew the cud of meet and bitter fancies. I doubt not there was no lack of others — a plentiful sprinkling of them all over the world. — We are all well pleased to know that you and Abe are going to shed your benign presence on us, and Fanny also (from whom we got a letter to day, & likewise from Helen) on your way to the Centennial. —

⁸² Copy of her letter, not the one she signed and sent.

A man in Nassau St. tells me that he can procure me a copy of Chaucer — Bell's edition, and new — for six dollars. What say you? If yes, I will invest. I think Abe will hardly do better. —

We relish your pears much — good thing at breakfast — and remember you thereby.

With friendliest regards to Abraham

Believe me, affectionately

Herman

P. S. W[e] rely & count upon that visit — you & Abe & Fanny; and only regret that my sister Helen is not also one of the party. I write her to day at Gansevoort.

[*Endorsed by Mrs. Lansing:*] Ans'd Sunday Oct. 1st 1876.

MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT LANSING

Oct. 12 '76.

104 E. 26 St.

Dear Cousin Kate:

In response to your[s] of the 1st: The Chaucer is in eight vols. — good print — same edition as mine — Bell's — but it is perfect. — However, as I understand, the Nassau St. man will procure it for me at the price named (\$6, I think) at any time I may desire it. it will be better to let it rest until your visit to us ere long, on your return from the Centennial.⁸³

By the way, I was there yesterday — went & returned same day; you will be much impressed with it; it is immense — a sort of tremendous Vanity Fair.

I was very much pleased with Mr Street's little poem.⁸⁴ It is admirable in its fidelity to nature and happy ensemble.

With kind regards to Abraham

Affectionately

Herman

MELVILLE TO ABRAHAM LANSING

104 E 26, N. Y.

Jan. 2, 1877

My Dear Abraham:

I was glad to get your note, and to know that you were so pleased with Beranger — *the volume*: a shabby looking little cask it is, but then, the contents! —

⁸³ Mrs. Lansing's diary of her visit to the Centennial at Philadelphia is in the Gansevoort-Lansing Collection in the Manuscript Division.

⁸⁴ Alfred Billings Street, of Albany.

I liked that Christmas Story you sent me, especially in the opening portion — the good old Dutch Saint's lamentation over these "degenerate days" which we account such an "advance."

Tell *Catherine* that her New Year Cake came along all right, and that we duly appreciated her Christmas kindness. By *we* I mean Lizzie and myself, the special donees, and also Bessie & Fanny, assistant *eatees*. —

By the way, — the almanac — I should have been sorry to have forgotten it — That venerable almanac,⁸⁵ which bears witness to the old times when some imagination yet lingered in this sort of publication. I relish looking over it mightily. It has set me to getting from Boston a similar almanac which still continues to be published there.⁸⁶ — Lizzie sends love to Kate and begs her to accept this in her acknowl^gmt^s for her share of the Christmas hamper.

My best remembrances also. Besy & Fanny⁸⁷ join.

Sincerely yours

Oh — A happy New Year to you — you & Kate.

H. Melville

Tell Kate I have not forgotten her commission.

MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT LANSING

New York Jan. 4, '77

Cousin Kate:

After some delay hardly avoidable, let me acknowledge your note, with enclosure. — What shall I say? — Well, so be it. Yet, in the repetition, how can I otherwise than accept it in the spirit in which it is proferred, and as coming thro' you from Uncle Peter in the carrying out of his kindly purpose.

— About the picture: It is in the framer's hands, and doubtless you will receive it in a day or two. In the absence of your Mr. Joiner I communicated with another person who seemed not unacquainted with your artistic affairs &c. He was very polite, so much so indeed that, fearing, were the matter left entirely to his discretion, he might enshrine the print too sumptuously, I felt forced to make some humble suggestions. But I hope the result will be satisfactory.

Lizzie sends love. So do Bessie & Fanny. — We all daily munch our New Year Cake; — which reminds me to wish you and Abraham a happy time for the next twelve months.

Sincerely & affectionately

H. Melville

⁸⁵ Probably the old Webster's Albany Almanac. Mrs. Lansing's long run of these is now in The New York Public Library.

⁸⁶ Probably Thomas's, which Professor Kittredge has immortalized in his "Old Farmer and his Almanac" (1905).

⁸⁷ His daughters Elizabeth and Frances.

ELIZABETH SHAW MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT
LANSING
(*Extract*)

New York Jan 27, 1877

Dear Kate,

Thanks for your letter of the 17th I rec^d it just after sending you a brief line with a letter forwarded to you — so I suppose *that* was the reason you were thinking of me that day, because I was thinking of you “rapport of spirits,” you see — And by the way, I have been interested of late in the accts of “Professor Baldwin” who has been lecturing in Boston on “Spiritualism,” and whose advertisement I enclose — I wish he would make a little clearer explanation of how he reads and answers the folded slips of paper after the manner of Foster and others — If I see anything more satisfactory in the papers I will cut it out — . . .

We all send love to you and Cousin Abe —

Affectionately yr cousin

Lizzie

ELIZABETH SHAW MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT
LANSING .
(*Extract*)

New York Feb 25, 1877

My dear Kate,

. . . All send love — please drop us a line or a postal when to expect you — and I want you *always* to mention Herman’s name in your letters, especially if it is to say anything about coming down — *I* know your feeling is always right to him, and so does every one else, but he is *morbidly* sensitive, poor fellow, and I always try (though I can’t succeed to my sorrow) to smooth the fancied rough edges to him wherever I can — so I know you will understand why I mention it — With our kindest regards to Cousin Abe believe me ever affectionately

yr cousin

Lizzie

MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT LANSING

My Dear Cousin Kate:

I was disappointed by your not dropping in upon us during your last trip to town — and, chiefly, because I have had something to say to you which I did not want formally to annoy you about in a letter, but meant to say to you then. — However, I will now no longer delay it. —



HERMAN MELVILLE'S FAMILY GROUP

1, 2. Thomas Melville and wife Priscilla Scollay: 3, 4. Allan Melville and wife Maria Gansevoort (age 20): parents.

SISTERS, BROTHERS, AND BROTHERS-IN-LAW:

- | | |
|--|-----------------------|
| 5. Augusta. | 6. Frances Priscilla. |
| 7a, 7b. George Griggs and wife Helen Maria. | |
| 8a, 8b. John C. Hoadley and wife Catherine Gansevoort. | |
| 9. Gansevoort. | 11. Thomas. |
| 10. Allan. | 12. Herman himself. |

It was this: You should have let that matter of the \$100 rest where it was left for a finality last summer. Your subsequent letter — not very long ago — re-inclosing the money, made such an appeal to me, and placed the matter on such grounds as to make declination difficult without an appearance of obstinacy and rudeness. But I repented my assent. — And I revoke it. Be prepared therefore, sooner or later I beg you, to receive the money back without comment. Should you return it, some Charity will receive it, and down goes your name again for the Lady Bountiful of Albany. —

Now, my dear Kin, my cousinly disposition towards you may not be worth much to you; still, if you desire me to retain it unimpaired, you must uncomplainingly indulge me in my whim, for such you may call it, if you like. Indeed, you are welcome to almost any opinion, except that I am prompted by the remotest thought of wounding you, or any absurd idea of setting up for myself a spurious dignity. —

Now about President Hayes? I chanced to turn over a file of your Albany Argus yesterday, and was all but blown off the stool by the tremendous fulmination of that indignant sheet. — But what's the use? life is short, and Hayes' term is four years, each of 365 days.

Lizzie, the girls, & I anticipate your & Fanny's visit with pleasure.

With the sincerest regards to Abe,

Believe me

Truly and affectionately

Herman

March 7th '77

— Dont concern yourself, I implore, as to replying to this note. Simply acknowledge its receipt, if you will, by a newspaper. —

[*Marginal note by Mrs. Lansing:*] Saturday June 23^d 1877 — Cousin Herman gave me the 100-Dollars which he in this note said he would refund to me. Given to me at his house 104 E. 26th St N. Y. City & ack by me by mail a few days afterward K. G. L.

MELVILLE TO JOHN C. HOADLEY⁸⁸

Saturday in Easter Week 1877

My Dear Fellow:

I propose buying a hairs-shirt and a scourge, and putting them to use for a week or so, as a penalty for my remissness in allowing your most friendly note of the 25 ult. to remain unanswered so long. — And yet I might say something in

⁸⁸ Melville's brother-in-law, who had married his sister, Catherine Gansevoort Melville, in 1853. Hoadley was himself a man of letters.

palliation of my incivility. You are young ; but I am verging upon three-score, and at times a certain lassitude steals over one — in fact, a disinclination for doing anything except the indispensable. At such moments the problem of the universe seems a humbug, and epistolary obligations mere moonshine, and the — well, nepenthe⁸⁹ seems all-in-all.

Your legend from Marco Polo I had never previously met with. How full of significance it is ! And beauty too. These legends of the Old Faith are really wonderful both from their multiplicity and their poetry. They far surpass the stories in the Greek mythologies. Dont you think so ? See, for example, the loss of St Elizabeth of Hungary.

— “He wins who highest aims” : whose translation is that ? Tell me. Thank you for sending me so beautiful a thing engrossed by your deft & dexterous digits⁹⁰ (The alliteration there was irresistible)

In return for your M.S. yarns I send you something I found the other day — came across it in a lot of papers.⁹¹ I remember that the lines were suggested by a passage in Gibbon (Decline & Fall) Have you a copy ? Turn to “*Antonine*” &c in index. What the deuce the thing means I dont know ; but here it is.

— By the way I have a ship on my District from Girgate. — Where’s that ? Why, in Sicily — The ancient Agrigentum. Ships arrive from there in this port, bringing sulphur ; but this is the first one I have happened to have officially to do with. I have not succeeded in seeing the captain yet — have only seen the mate — but hear that he has in possession some stones from those magnificent Grecian ruins, and I am going to try to get a fragment, however small, if possible, which I will divide with you.

Best love to Kate & your two Princesses of India.

H Melville

[*Side note:*] Lizzie and the girls are well, and if they knew of my writing would send their affectionate remembrances to all.

⁸⁹ A magic potion of the ancients, supposed to drown sorrow and misfortune, well defined in Spencer’s “*Fairy Queen*,” iv. iii. 43, thus:

“Nepenthe is a drinke of soverayne grace,
Devised by the Gods, for to asswage
Harts grief, and bitter gall away to chace.”

⁹⁰ The reference is to an engrossed copy of a poem of twenty-one lines that Hoadley had sent to him earlier in the year. This manuscript accompanies Melville’s letter in The New York Public Library.

⁹¹ The enclosure follows this letter.

[Enclosure]

THE AGE OF THE ANTONINES.⁹²

1.

While hope awaits millennial years,
 Though dim of late the signs,
 Back to the past a glance be cast —
 The age of the Antonines!
 Oh, summit of fate and zenith of time,
 When a pagan gentleman reigned,
 And the olive was nailed to the inn of the world,
 Nor the peace of the just was feigned.
 A halcyon age — afar it shines
 The imperial age of the Antonines!

2.

Hymns to the nation's federate gods
 Went up from friendly shrines;
 No demagogue beat the pulpit-drum
 In the age of the Antonines!
 Ere the sting was dreamed to be taken from death —
 Ere the saving of scamps was taught,
 They reasoned of fate at the flowing feast
 Nor stifled the fluent thought:
 We sham, we shuffle, while faith declines:
 They were *frank* in the age of the Antonines!

3.

Orders and grades and due degree —
 None felt how the leveller pines;
 Yea, men were better than blatantly free
 In the age of the Antonines!
 Under Law, made Will, the world reposed,
 And the Ruler's right confessed,
 For the Gods elected the Emperor then —
 The foremost of men the best!
 Ah, might we read in the Future's signs
 The Past revived in the Antonines!

⁹² The text presented here varies considerably from that which was printed in the "Timoleon" collection of forty-three poems, privately printed by The Caxton Press of New York, 1891, in an edition of twenty-five copies. An important variation is the application to America in the last two lines in the later version, thus:

"Ah, might we read in America's signs
 The Age restored of the Antonines."

P. S. to the Note —

Just looked over the accompanying letter which I wrote this morning. It is a queer sort of an absurd scribble, but if it evidences good-fellowship and good feeling, it serves the purpose. You are going (as I said before) but I aint; and at my years, and with my disposition, or rather constitution, one gets to care less and less for everything except downright good feeling. Life is so short, and so ridiculous and irrational (from a certain point of view) that one knows not what to make of it, unless — well, finish the sentence for yourself.

Thine

In these inexplicable fleshly bonds

N. B. *I aint crazy.*

H. M.

ELIZABETH SHAW MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT
LANSING
(*Extract*)

New York June 5 — 1877

Dear Kate,

. . . Today probably Cousin Abe has acknowledgment from Herman of his missive rec^d yesterday — I need not say that the kindly remembrance from your dear father gave him great pleasure — and I hope it will make him really happier to have something to call his own — poor fellow he has so much mental suffering to undergo (and oh how *all* unnecessary) I am rejoiced when anything comes into his life to give him even a moment's relief — . . .

Affectionately yr Cousin

Lizzie

MELVILLE TO MR. AND MRS. ABRAHAM LANSING

Gansevoort

My Dear Cousin Kate

Aug. 14 [1877]

&

My Dear Fellow, Abraham:

Let me repeat to you my acknowledgments for your genial hospitality and great kindness during my brief visit in Albany. I enjoyed it right well. And was glad to have seen Judge Hurlburt's⁹³ place and spent so agreeable an evening there.

⁹³ Elisha P. Hurlbut, who married Catherine Van Vechten.

I staid over about three hours or so at the Springs.⁹⁴ I lunched at a neat little restaurant I found there, and visited the hotels, presenting no doubt a distinguished appearance in my duster, and finally took up a commanding position on the piazza of the Great Union, and surveyed at my leasure the moving spectacle of fashion and in some instances — folly. A New York paper also of the day helped to occupy the time.

I found Kate and Fany and Frankie here — all well and warm in welcome.

To-day is faultless weather and I shall dedicate it to leisure and the piazza.

To morrow I must break away — as I did from you — and start for the mountains. Kate & Fany send abundance of love. Accept as much from me, and Helen, always

& sincerely yours

H. Melville

P. S. I go off visiting so seldom, that, really, I omit to do some things I ought to do, and would take pleasure in doing; they, simply, do not occur to me at the time, but reproachfully molest me afterwards in the omission. — Well, I did not call to pay my respects to Miss Lansing and Miss Anna. But apologies are awkward, and incredulity is but natural in some circumstances. Pray, Abraham, do the fitting thing for me, and redeem me in the good opinion of the ladies.

N. B. I will subject myself to any penance the ladies may be pleased to assign.

Final P. S. — Having, at Fany's request, left this letter open, so that she might add something or enclose, I am tempted to say one word more — namely: I have just been reading in a copy of Frank Leslie's Illustrated paper "The Old Garden" by Mr Street. How beautiful, and poetically true to nature it is! It is like a flower-and-fruit piece by some mellow old Fleming. — There, I wont bore you any more. — H. M.

MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT LANSING

Jane & West Sts:

Sep. 5. '77.

Dear Cousin Kate:

Your note of the 2^d acknowledging the receipt of the set of Chaucer; and also your note of the 3^d enclosing the price of the set — thank you for both of them.

You mention having spent a peaceful Sunday at Gansevoort, enjoying it much, with Abraham. I should have liked it well to have been of the company. I was so sorry that, purposing my main visit among the mountains, I was not able to devote more time to Gansevoort. Helen, Kate, Fanny, & Minnie must be having a

⁹⁴ Saratoga Springs.

pleasant time there together. — Oh, I have to acknowledge the receipt of a note from you of Aug. 9 in response to mine of a few days before. This note did not come to my hands until after my arrival home from the mountains, it, probably, arriving here the afternoon of the day I left, and was kept for me. — I have just looked over the note again. — So it appears that I used in my letter to you the expression “*people of leisure*.” If I did, it was a faulty expression — as applied in that case. I doubtless meant people the disposition of whose time is not subject to another. But it amused me — your disclaiming the thing, as if there was any merit in *not* being a person of leisure. Whoever is not in the possession of leisure can hardly be said to possess independence. They talk of the *dignity of work*. Bosh. True Work is the *necessity* of poor humanity’s earthly condition. The dignity is in leisure. Besides, 99 hundreth of all the *work* done in the world is either foolish and unnecessary, or harmful and wicked. But bless my heart! I am scribbling here at a pretty rate. I will stop at once; and promise never to do so again.

Bessie & the girls are doing well at the White Mountains, and will remain there yet for a time. Their absence makes it decidedly lonely often in the house. But I take my meals at the Hartnetts:⁹⁵ who are all that one can wish as hostesses. There are more agreeable people there too whom I meet.

My kindest regards to Abraham. Tell him not to be rash now, and sit up all night reading Chaucer, and comparing his variorum editions &c.

Always affectionately

Yours

Cousin Herman

— My kindest regards to Cousin Kate Hurlburt and the Judge,⁹⁶ and family, when you see them. I enjoyed my visit to them very much — & let me add — my entire visit at Albany. —

ELIZABETH SHAW MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT
LANSING
(*Extract*)

104 East 26th st

Oct. 9 — 1877

Dear Kate,

I should have replied to your letter of 3^d before but have been up to my eyes in work, and we are now all upside down with painters — for *wonderful* to say, we

⁹⁵ The Misses Hartnett on Twenty-fifth Street, where he was wont to dine at times.

⁹⁶ See note to preceding letter.

are making some much needed renovation of some parts of the house — and getting some new furniture in the bed rooms, to replace the shabbiness which has so long prevailed there — Fanny is to take the little room for hers, so we shall have a *decent* guest chamber for two,⁹⁷ with some new (cottage) furniture — And I shall be quite impatient for you and Abe to come and occupy it — for I want *you* to be the first to christen it — I can't tell now when we shall get through — but hope to, before a great while — I shall be very glad to have the pillows you speak of, and thank you — they will serve exactly for the new bed — . . .

I don't believe Herman will go to the Saratoga Cen.⁹⁸ he cannot get away, even if he care to — he is well & joins with one in love to yourself and Cousin Abe — . . .

Ever affectionately
Yr Cousin

Lizzie

ELIZABETH SHAW MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT
LANSING
(*Extract*)

New York Dec 31 1877

Dear Kate,

We were glad to hear by Fanny's letter that you got home safely — it was *very* unsatisfactory that flying call of yours at the door — I think you might have given us a little time, just enough to look at our "improvements" — . . . We had a very pleasant Christmas gathering at Tom's and the nieces, all, spent the rest of the week there, and the baby — well of course you have heard all about him from his great aunt Fanny — on this occasion he sat up at the table for an hour or more as straight and good as any one — . . .

ever affectionately
Yr Cousin
Lizzie

After all you didn't christen the new room! but I shall look for you to come and make a visit "like a Christian" before long —

⁹⁷ From Mrs. Melville's letter of September 30, we learn the new guest chamber and other renovations were made on the upper floor of the house.

⁹⁸ Centennial of the battle of Saratoga.

MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT LANSING

104 E 26 [Street]

Aug 1, '78

Dear Cousin Kate:

Of course — as I said when you broached the matter to me here — I shall be very happy to be your agent in presenting to the Lenox Library⁹⁹ a copy of Henry's Memorial.¹⁰⁰

Send it down by Adams Express, to be left and called for there, at their office in 23^d St. near 5th Ave. Advise me by mail at the time of sending, and it will be all right.

You refer to the travellers. They were to have left Boston — as Lizzie said in her note received Wednesday — yesterday for the mountains.

Copious showers we have been having here of late, but cooler weather.

Hoping you are well, and with kind regards to Abraham,

Believe me

Sincerely

Your Cousin

MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT LANSING

104 E 26 [Street]

Aug. 6. '78

Dear Cousin Kate:

I got yours of the 4th last night, and this morning on my way to my far up-town "District," I took the Memorial Volume to the Lenox Library, hoping to see there Mr Moore¹⁰¹ the librarian, whom I have met two or three times. Unfortunately he was not there; and the library it seems, is closed for the season. I got in, however, and left the Book with the janitor in perfect security, leaving a brief note for Mr Moore, in which I said I should take an early opportunity to call again & say something to him especially about the gift. — By the way, it is a beautiful copy; and upon my first opening the parcel in the janitor's presence, he exclaimed admiringly at the binding.

⁹⁹ The Lenox Library, founded in 1870 by James Lenox, at Fifth Avenue, 70th to 71st Streets, was first opened for public use in 1877. It now is part of the consolidation — The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations.

¹⁰⁰ The reference is to a copy of the memorial biography of Col. Henry Sanford Gansevoort, written for Mrs. Lansing by John C. Hoadley, Melville's brother-in-law.

¹⁰¹ George Henry Moore, LL.D., superintendent of the Lenox Library, who continued in that post until his death in 1892. It was the custom then and for years thereafter, as remembered by the present editor, to keep the library closed during the summer months. The janitor to whom Melville delivered the book was also named Moore, but of this he was not aware.



GANSEVOORT FAMILY GROUP

1. Gen. Peter Gansevoort, Jr., by Stuart.
2. His wife Catherina Van Schaick Gansevoort, by Ames (1823).
- 3 and 4. Hon. Peter Gansevoort and wife Susan Lansing Gansevoort, from crayons by T. W. Dewing (1875).
5. Brig.-Gen. Henry Sanford Gansevoort (1865).
- 6 and 7. Hon. Abraham Lansing and wife Catherine Gansevoort Lansing (1879).

About the invitation to stay over with you Saturday & Sunday next — thank you for your kindness. Yes, I will come with pleasure. I will leave here Thursday night on the boat, & will probably be at 115 Wash. Ave. at breakfast time — if convenient to you.

With kind regards to Abraham

Sincerely

Your Cousin

MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT LANSING

New York

104 E. 26 [Street]

Aug 12 [1878]

Dear Cousin Kate:

After two prodigious bumpers of coffee at the depot (from the effect of which I have hardly yet recovered) off we started for New York where we arrived about ½ past 10. Upon unlocking the front door — two letters awaited me (thanks to the “letter-slip”) one from Lizzie & one from a young gentleman by the name of Thomas. The latter dated his note from Copps(?) Hill. Curious coincidence — Fanny is there. —

I enjoyed myself very much while with you — in fact, so much, that upon returning to this solitary house the loneliness is enhanced. I don't know that I shall visit you & Abraham again, if the eventual result is but an augmentation of the blues. — Howsomedever [*sic*], every one manages to rub (?) along; and so, Cousin Kate, with love to yourself and kindest remembers to him whom you only a thousandth part appreciate

I remain

Your Cousin

ELIZABETH SHAW MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT
LANSING

104 East 26th st

New York Nov 6, 1878

Dear Kate,

Many thanks for your kind and judicious letter received this morning — The carpet came safely yesterday afternoon, and Herman has given me a long message to send you — He thinks it a very handsome one, and thanks you very much for your kindness in thinking of it for his room, and sending it, and hopes you will not think he does not appreciate it, if he hands it over to Bessie for *her* room —

which it just about fits, and which is sadly in need of some kind of covering — especially as it nearly matches her grey mats — of course she is very anxious to have it, as her old *red* one with her *blue* trimming, has been an “eye sore” to her for some time, and I was just contemplating whether we should try to worry through the winter with it, or put down matting —

As to Herman’s room he is so enamored of a *floor* without a “stuffy carpet” that he does not want to have it covered at all but only have a mat here & there — I fear it will be cold for him in the winter, but as all the cracks have been filled up, he thinks not — The carpet is a lovely one and we are all pleased at your kindness in sending it —

We have been *very* busy and are now nearly at rights again — I have been spending Aunt Lucy’s special legacy to me (\$100.00) on our back parlor, and you will see a great improvement when you come again — I thought I could not do better than to put it in some form that we might all enjoy together —

We shall hope to see you and Cousin Abe at your convenience — A week from next Monday we expect to have a few days visit from the *Sisters Thomas* — which has been contemplated for some time — but we have not been ready to have strangers till we were *all* in order — Bessie is congratulating herself that her room will now be satisfactory for them to see —

I have been writing to Stanny — he is in Quincy Cal. where he has occupation, and is quite well — but he has been sick poor fellow, and had to go in the hospital at Sacramento for some time — he has seen some very hard times, and deserves much credit for his pluck and patience under difficulties and disappointments —

The girls are well and very busy, and send much love to you & Cousin Abe — so does

Your affectionate

Cousin Lizzie

MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT LANSING

104 E. 26 [Street]

Nov. 26 [1878]

Dear Cousin Kate:

Your note of yesterday with Fanny’s¹⁰² were received this A. M. And I write forthwith as to your kind invitation, regretting for myself, Bessie & Fanny,¹⁰³ that we shall not be able to accept it, seeing that it is arranged already that we are to have a little thanksgiving affair here, of which “the young man”

¹⁰² His sister, Frances Priscilla.

¹⁰³ His daughter, Frances, who was married to Henry B. Thomas in 1880. Probably “the young man” was Mr. Thomas. “Bessie” is no doubt meant for his older daughter.

will of course be the central figure. But we are well pleased to learn both from you and Aunt Fanny¹⁰⁴ that next Monday you will be on your way hitherward, and that the next day we shall welcome you at 104. — 104 reminds me of your trunk. By all means let the Expressman bring it at once to the house.

My kind regards to Abraham, with hopes that he may soon be all right again.

Best love to Fanny, who will, I know, overlook by [*sic* for my] not writing her in especial, seeing that this note is substantially addressed to you together.

Affectionately

Herman

Lizzie is in the midst of her preparations for tomorrow's departure for Boston; and so, I fancy, will barely have time to write.

She is not at hand just now, or would send love.

ELIZABETH SHAW MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT
LANSING
(*Extract*)

[New York] March 7th 1879

Dear Kate,

Your letter to Bessie I am going to try to write a few lines in answer to — though I am sick myself with one of my prostrated turns — and hardly able to guide my pencil — but I want to express my thanks to you for all your kindness to the girls while they were on their visit to you — they enjoyed themselves very much — and more especially for your interest so generously shown in Bessie's poor hands — You will be glad to hear, I am sure, that she began the binding up her fingers in splints at once with a *very marked* favorable effect towards straightening out though it is hardly a week yet — at times they pain her a good deal and we have to loosen the tie — but she feels much encouraged and is desirous to continue the treatment — She has taken the powders regularly & has 4 or 5 left — I certainly *do* want her to try homeopathic treatment if Dr Cox can prescribe for her at such a distance — I think I should feel want of confidence in any stranger here — And if you *will* be so kind as to consult him for her, and he thinks he can cure or even permanently help her, I shall be sincerely grateful to you, and be willing indeed to pay the charges for his advice and medicines — only one thing he ought to know & that is her *extreme delicacy* of constitution, and want of vital force — how little strain on her strength she can bear & how anxious we feel about her generally — so perhaps he could not do with her as with a *strong* patient — she says she did not tell him anything about her general health — his

¹⁰⁴ Aunt to his children, but his own sister.

suggestion about straightening her fingers at once, *by force*, if carried out I believe would kill her — You, who are so full of life & vigor (for which you ought to thank Heaven daily) can hardly appreciate what it is to be in the weak and prostrated condition that Bessie and I suffer from more or less nearly all the time and which in my case drags me down at intervals as now when I cannot walk across the room without staggering — . . . There, I have exhausted myself — and you too I fear trying to read this scribble, — it is the best I could do now — . . . With much love to you & Cousin Abe

Lizzie

The girls send much love — Herman also, with thanks for your kind invitation Millie & the baby are getting on very well indeed

MELVILLE TO ABRAHAM LANSING

New York Nov 17, '79¹⁰⁵

My Dear Mr Lansing :

We are all very much obliged to you for your Christmas invitation, but upon consideration, hardly think we shall be able to accept it. The truth is Lizzie is not very robust — and the journey northward at midwinter — why, she rather dreads it. — However, we all wish you & Cousin Kate a Merry Christmas (in advance) wherever you or she may happen to be at the time.

With love to Cousin Kate

Believe me

Sincerely yours

H. Melville

ELIZABETH SHAW MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT
LANSING
(*Extract*)

Boston Dec 4 — 1879

Dear Kate,

. . . I should like ever so much to join you at the Christmas dinner, dear Kate, but fear I shall not be able to — if Herman would go, it would be different — but as it is, I shall have to forego it —

Our Thanksgiving was, as you may suppose, a very sad one — only our own immediate family were assembled — My brothers are just as kind as they can be, but the house seems strange and empty to me and it is hard to realize that mother will never more be seen in the familiar places — Yes, time brings changes faster

¹⁰⁵ On the day that this letter was written Lansing left Albany *en route* for Maryland. The next day Mrs. Lansing came down from Albany and visited the Melvilles at 104 East 26th Street.

and faster as we advance in life, and we must accept what comes, painful though it is —

I will send you the paper containing the obituary notice of mother as soon as I can get some more copies — I think I showed it to you in New York but you will like to keep it —

Remember me kindly to cousin Abe & believe me affectionately

Your cousin

Lizzie

MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT LANSING

104 E. 26 [Street]

April 15, '80

My Dear Cousin Kate:

Your note announcing the decease of Mr John Lansing¹⁰⁶ is just received. — How sudden the event. Express to Abraham the true sympathies of all of us. — Though I met Mr. John Lansing but two or three times, yet each time I was most agreeably impressed with his intelligence and social disposition. —

I am sorry that my being at the funeral is hardly possible. Even on the occasion of the 5th I was not at perfect liberty for the day.

Lizzie & the girls and myself unite in love to Abraham and you.

Always sincerely

Herman

[*Endorsed by Mrs. Lansing:*] Ack through Cousin Lizzie April 22. 1880.

MELVILLE TO ABRAHAM LANSING

104 E 26 [Street]

Dec. 8, '80

Dear Mr Lansing:

Many thanks for your polite invitation to the Reception by the Fort Orange Club¹⁰⁷ — Thanks in behalf of the family, I mean, myself included. But Lizzie is in Boston & Bessie is keeping house, and I am an — old foggy; so none of us can comply, much as we regret it.

With kind remembrances to Kate — and, by the way, acknowledgments for the paper, —

I am, very truly yours

H. Melville

¹⁰⁶ John Thomas Lansing, born March 17, 1833; died April 14, 1880. He was buried on the 16th from the Gansevoort-Lansing house, 115 Washington Avenue.

¹⁰⁷ The principal gentlemen's club of Albany. The occasion was probably a "Ladies Night" or "Guest Night."

MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT HOADLEY¹⁰⁸104 E 26th [Street]3^d day after Xmas

1881

My Dear Kate :

Dont be alarmed by these beautiful flourishes of mine; I have been recently improving my penmanship by lessons from a High Dutch professor who teaches all the stylish flourishes imaginable. —

But my object in dropping you this line is to thank you, My dear Kate, for your little vase. It is now on my mantle, and contributes much to the embellishment thereof, and I value it as your gift.

We are all as usual — that is to say, jolly; and trusting that you too are in the same happy case, — with kind regards to John & love to the girls, Believe me

Affectionately

Herman

MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT HOADLEY

104 E. 26 [Street]

April 12 '82

Dear Kate :

Just received a note from Minnie, — for the which, pray, give her my affectionate acknowledgments — Wherein among other interesting matters, she says — what she previously had heard distant rumors of — or did she read it under the head of "*Personal*" in the newspapers? — I say, she says that you and John propose a visit to these parts some time next week. Well: I write at once to say that, altho', I suppose, you will spend days with Tom, you must not fail — you & John — to spend a portion of the time with us. We should be most happy to greet you. Lizzie — who at present is at Orange helping Fanny to break in the "babby" to going without its nurse¹⁰⁹ — would cheerfully unite with me in the invitation, were she here. Indeed, she was talking with me about making the invitation some days ago.

Lizzie & I rec^d letters from Helen & Fanny (jointly to & from) which I acknowledged by paper, & will ere long be happy to reciprocate by letter. With love to them and yourself & all, I remain — *No, I don't*, for I forgot to say we had a pleasant visit from the Lieutenant, who went with Bessie¹¹⁰ to the Zoo &

¹⁰⁸ His sister, who was Mrs. John C. Hoadley. She had two daughters.

¹⁰⁹ Reference to his wife's visit to his daughter, Mrs. Henry B. Thomas, and the grandchild.

¹¹⁰ His daughter, Elizabeth, born in 1853.

shook hands with Mr Barnum.¹¹¹ — How he has grown! Now then, I *remain* — at 104 E. 26 St. as usual, and am affectionately

Herman

ELIZABETH SHAW MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT
LANSING
(*Extract*)

New York July 29th 1885

My dear Kate,

... Herman's position in the Custom House is in the Surveyor's Department — a *district inspector* — his work is all on the uptown piers nearly to Harlem — and he has held office since Dec. 1866 — Of course there have been removals, and he may be removed any day, for which I should be very sorry as apart from every thing else the *occupation* is a great thing for him — and he could not take any other post that required head work, & sitting at a desk — If Cousin Abe has an opportunity to say anything for him, I should be glad, but *do not let* Herman know that the subject has been mentioned between us — . . .

Most affectionately yr cousin

Lizzie

MELVILLE TO ABRAHAM LANSING

New York

Aug. 21st '85

My Dear Mr. Lansing

I received yours of the 19th yesterday, inclosing the will and the "waiver"; and herewith you have the latter duly signed and acknowledged.¹¹²

Yours truly

H. Melville

ABRAHAM LANSING TO MELVILLE¹¹³

Sept. 9 [188]5.

Dear Mr Melville:

The tenant of Fanny's farm¹¹⁴ writes for an extension of his lease, so as to sow with a prospect of being able to reap next harvest. His ground has been ploughed.

¹¹¹ Phineas T. Barnum, the showman.

¹¹² Refers to the will of Melville's unmarried sister, Frances Priscilla, who had died this year.

¹¹³ From Lansing's letterpress copybook.

¹¹⁴ At Gansevoort. See note 4, *supra*, Griggs letter of September 12, 1857.

It seems to be a good plan to extend the lease for a year. If you agree with it, will you please sign & return to me the enclosed power of attorney.

Only your signature is necessary.

Yours truly

Herman Melville Esq.

Abraham Lansing

ELIZABETH SHAW MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT
LANSING
(*Extract*)

New York Jan 10, 1886

My dear Kate,

You and Cousin Abe have so kindly interested yourselves in Herman's retaining his Custom House post, that I want to tell you among the first that he has resigned, for very good and sufficient reasons — For a year or so past he has found the duties too onerous for a man of his years, and at times of exhaustion, both mental and physical, he has been on the point of giving it up, but recovering a little, has held on, very naturally anxious to do so, for many reasons — This month was a good turning-point, completing 19 years of faithful service, during which there has not been a single complaint against him — So he retires honorably of his own accord — He has a great deal unfinished work at his desk which will give him occupation, which together with his love of books will prevent time from hanging heavy on his hands — and I hope he will get into a more quiet frame of mind, exempt from the daily invitation of over work — . . .

Hoping you are both well, and with our united good wishes for a very happy new year

believe me affectionately

your cousin

Lizzie S M

ABRAHAM LANSING TO MELVILLE¹¹⁵

Aug 19 [188]6

My dear Mr Melville :

I enclose herewith my check as administrator with the will annexed of Fannys Estate¹¹⁶ for \$3019.⁵⁰/100 in payment of the legacy of \$3000. left you by the will, with interest thereon from July 10, 1886.

Will you please sign & return to me the enclosed receipt & duplicate, & oblige

Yours very truly

Herman Melville Esq

Abraham Lansing

104 E 26th St N. Y.

Adm. &c

¹¹⁵ From Lansing's letterpress copybook.

¹¹⁶ The estate of Melville's sister, Frances Priscilla Melville.

ABRAHAM LANSING TO MELVILLE¹¹⁷

Sep 28 [188]6.

Dear Mr Melville :

I send herewith checks payable to the order of Mrs Melville & Bessie¹¹⁸ in payment of the legacies bequeathed to them by Fanny's will less 5 per cent tax, under the act of 1885, & with interest from July 10, 1886. Also a receipt & duplicate for their signatures, to be returned to me.

Stanwix¹¹⁹ had a legacy of \$100. under the will. Is there any administration upon his estate?

Will you kindly deliver the checks & return me the receipts executed & oblige

Yours very truly

Herman Melville Esq

Abraham Lansing

ABRAHAM LANSING TO MELVILLE¹²⁰

Oct 15 [188]6

My Dear Sir :

I have yours of 12th inst with receipt & duplicate for legacies also a memorandum directing pay^t of Stanwix legacy to you.

I send herewith my check as adm^r & c for \$96.⁴⁹/100 in payment of the legacy to Stanwix less the legacy tax, & with interest.

In the absence of testamentary disposition & of claims of creditors you are entitled to the legacy as next of kin. I therefore make the payment to you assuming these facts without the form of administration.

Yours very truly

Herman Melville Esq

Abraham Lansing

MELVILLE TO ABRAHAM LANSING

N. Y. March 16 [1889]

Dear Mr. Lansing :

I have your first note, and the telegram following it, and also your second note.

Enclosed herewith you have the duplicate receipts and the first cheque.¹²¹

The first receipt }
I have destroyed. }

Truly yours

H. Melville

¹¹⁷ From Lansing's letterpress copybook.

¹¹⁸ Melville's wife and daughter, Elizabeth.

¹¹⁹ His deceased son, Stanwix Melville, had given his father power of attorney to collect his share in his aunt's estate, under date of "San Francisco California Feby 14th 1886."

¹²⁰ From Lansing's letterpress copybook.

¹²¹ This letter and Melville's receipt to Lansing are complementary, relative to the residue interest of Melville in the liquidated estate of his sister, Frances Priscilla, who had died in 1885. See letters of that year, *supra*.

MELVILLE'S RECEIPT FOR INHERITANCE

(Enclosure)

Received New York, March 16, 1889 from Abraham Lansing as administrator with the will annexed of the will of Priscilla F. Melville deceased Eleven hundred & twenty three & ⁷⁹/₁₀₀ dollars ————— being my portion under said will of the remainder of the estate of said Priscilla F. Melville and paid to me in accordance with the decree of the Surrogate of Saratoga County N. Y. entered upon the final judicial settlement of the accounts of said administrator on the 11th March 1889.

And in consideration thereof and of One dollar I do hereby release and discharge said administrator from all liability to me for and on account of said estate. \$1123⁷⁹/₁₀₀

Herman Melville [Seal]

ELIZABETH SHAW MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT
LANSING

(Extract)

Surf Hotel

Fire Island, N. Y.

June 30 — 1889

My dear Kate,

. . . Herman came down with me on the 15th and staid a few days — since that, Bessie, Fanny & children have spent a week here, all enjoying it very much — I expect to be here all this week, & part of next — and I hope you will write me.

ELIZABETH SHAW MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT
LANSING

(Extract)

New York Jan. 8, 1891

My dear Kate,

I have been thinking for some days of writing you — because I dont want you to hear in any other or exaggerated way that Herman has been pretty ill for the last week or so — when he had a turn of dizziness or vertigo in the night — which the Dr feared might eventuate in a serious way — but now I am glad to say that his strength which seemed to leave him in one night has gradually returned and he is improving every day — he has not been out yet or even down stairs, but the Dr says there seems to be no reason why he should not entirely recover and be as well as before — He has not been very well all winter & has had a bad cough —



THE CHIMNEY PLACE AT "ARROWHEAD"
PITTSFIELD, MASS.
(Photograph by C. Seaver, Jr., August 5, 1870)



THE OLD GANSEVOORT MANSION
AT GANSEVOORT, SARATOGA COUNTY, NEW YORK
(From a pencil sketch by E. L. Henry, 1874)

but that is nearly gone now — and he has enjoyed this clear cold weather going out every day & taking long walks — the day before he was taken sick he walked $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile in a bitter cold air — I think it was too much for him — . . . I have been so much absorbed with Herman who requires a good deal of attention — . . . affectionately

your cousin

Lizzie

ELIZABETH SHAW MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT
LANSING

New York May 28 1891

My dear Kate,

I was very glad to hear from you and have been trying for the few days past to get from Herman what he might chance to know of Uncle Herman by leading the conversation that way — He says that Uncle went to G[ansevoort] at an early age to take charge of the lumbering interests there for his father — to whom he thinks, but is not sure that a large wooded tract of land was *granted* to him for his military services — the land in question having belonged to a tory and was confiscated — there was also a saw mill to put the timber into marketable shape — On one of his first visits to New York he met and married Catherine Quackenboss who cheerfully went to this wilderness and lived the rest of her life — She was a very eccentric character as no doubt you have heard — All her property was sunk in the great fire of 1835 — and Uncle H[erman] never dared to tell her — but paid her her usual dividends out of his own means — The date of their marriage you could get from Mr Greenleaf (or, from the old family bible — which I suppose is extant) & perhaps other matters of interest —

His military career was only that of the State militia as far as H[erman] knows — and he has never seen any printed notice —

I should think Kate Hoadley might have interesting records that came from Gansevoort — you know what quantities of papers &c Helen found there —

I hope you are quite well — Herman is tolerably well but not strong — Fanny's children have been having the measles — Eleanor, just in the midst of moving — Frances was sick here — both mild attacks — and all well now — but Harry has been laid up with them, and is not out yet — We expect to go to Fire Island in June — Herman also, as he is not well enough to be left alone — I suppose he will get very impatient but I have to go there for nose cold

In haste with love

Lizzie

MELVILLE'S DEATH AND MRS. LANSING'S DIARY, 1891

Herman Melville died, on September 28, 1891, of heart failure, at his home, 104 East 26th Street, New York City, and on the afternoon of the 30th his mortal remains were interred in Woodlawn Cemetery. He was survived by his wife and two daughters, one unmarried.

The following entries are taken from Mrs. Lansing's diary :

Monday, September 28th, 1891

Rec'd *Telegram* telling us of *Cousin Herman's* death — he died *this morning*.
Tuesday, September 29th

I went down town & had notices of Cousin Herman Melville in "Ev'g Journal," "Argus," & "Press & Knickerbocker."

Wednesday, September 30th

Up by 5 o'ck Packed own bag & after a hurried breakfast left Albany by the 6 A. M. Train for N. Y.

Arrived on Time . . . went up 104 E. 26th Saw Cousin Herman in his last sleep —

Thursday October 1st.

Out all day Went to see Cousin Lizzie & Bessie Kate Hoadley & Minnie
Came up by the 6 o'ck Train

ELIZABETH SHAW MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT
LANSING

(*Extract*)

105 East 18th st

New York April 14. 1897

My dear Kate

. . . Herman's book that you ask about — I suppose you mean "Israel Potter or Fifty years Exile" — was published first as a serial in Putnam's Magazine — and afterward in book form by George P. Putnam N. Y. in 1855 — but is now out of print —

The paper copy of Typee, Omoo, Moby Dick & White Jacket gotten up last summer has had a very good sale — and recently I have had overtures from a Dresden publisher to produce them in German — notwithstanding that they were issued in that language half a century ago — so I am pleased to see how they still live — Shall we not see you here some time or other? We are all keeping well so far — Bessie joins me in love.

Affectionately your cousin

Lizzie

ELIZABETH SHAW MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT
LANSING

(*Extract*)

36 East Housatonic st

Pittsfield - Mass. Sept. 5 - 1897

My dear Kate,

I send you with this a pamphlet in which I have collected & had printed the memorial articles that Mr Smith wrote for the "Evening Journal" here,¹²² soon after Herman's death — they were scattered in poor type through many numbers of the paper where they would never be read and I thought they ought to be rescued from oblivion for the family and a few near friends, if only for Mr Smith's sake — It had been his intention (taking these articles for a basis) to rewrite the whole thing and enlarge it to a small book similar to his "Poet of the Hills" (Dr Holmes) — but he did not live to accomplish it — He was Herman's ardent admirer and most faithful friend for these many long years, and I value him for that and regret to lose him from the Pittsfield circle alas now so sadly diminished — . . .

You ask for a photograph of Herman — but I have not one here to send — I will gladly give it to you, if you will come for it when I return home — then you can take your choice from the two I have — we expect to be home about 10th Oct. . . .

Bessie joins me in love and kind wishes — Please let me know if the pamphlet reaches you safely, if only by postal —

Affectionately your cousin

Lizzie S. M.

ELIZABETH SHAW MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT
LANSING

(*Extract*)

105 East 18th st

New York May 26 — 1901

Dear Cousin Kate,

I am very glad to hear from you once more and feared you had altogether forgotten us — I have thought a great deal of you in your loneliness and sorrow with sincere sympathy — your husband was one of a thousand, commanding the respect and affection of all who knew him —

¹²² A pamphlet of thirty-one pages, with a gray paper cover title: "Biographical Sketch of Herman Melville. 1891." On p. 1 the heading is: "Herman Melville. Written for the Evening Journal, Pittsfield, Mass., by J. E. A. Smith, 1891."

I send you two *carte de visite* photos of Herman, and want you to take your choice and send me back the other — The one of my father is rather a poor photograph¹²³ from William Hunt's painting in the Salem Court House for which he was requested to sit, or rather stand, by the Essex Bar — supposed to be addressing the Jury — It was considered one of Hunt's master-pieces, and went far to making the reputation which Hunt afterwards acquired — . . .

I am always glad to hear from you, and wish I could see you once in a while —
Bessie joins me in love —

Affectionately your cousin

Lizzie

ELIZABETH SHAW MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT
LANSING
(*Extract*)

105 East 18th st

New York Nov. 30 — 1902

My dear cousin Kate,

I send you a few of Herman's autographs and can give you more if you wish —
Enclosed also are the dates that you asked for —

I send also a photograph of the Arrowhead dining room (formerly the kitchen) enlarged from a *carte de visite* size — It is not quite as large as the one that you saw on my old desk — because that I had especially made for Herman at considerable cost — at a time when I could only afford to have the one example — I had forgotten when you were here that I had some of this size — . . .

I thought of you with much sympathy on Thanksgiving day — that day of sad memories to so many of us who mourn the friends and companions who have gone before — . . . My dear old pastor Dr Bellows used to quote to me the precept to "Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain," and I often think of it — . . .

Affectionately your friend and cousin

Lizzie S. M.

ELIZABETH SHAW MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT
LANSING
(*Extract*)

105 East 18th st

New York Dec 1902

Dear Cousin Kate,

The photograph that I sent you *was* the old dining-room at Arrowhead, as named and dated on the back — I have not an unmounted one, but I think this

¹²³ This photograph of Judge Shaw is reproduced in this contribution, *supra*.

could be "floated off" the card — I don't think I have any *better* autographs than those I sent you of Herman — but I enclose a few more, as you wish — . . .

A gentleman in the Public Library in Boston has written me about a book called *New York Old & New* — its story — streets and landmarks by R. R. Wilson — in which besides a great deal of interest relating to the earlier history of the city there appears very honorable mention of Herman and his writings — I have not seen it yet, but shall get it from the Library — . . .

Affectionately your Cousin

Lizzie

ELIZABETH SHAW MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT
LANSING
(*Extract*)

105 East 18th st

New York April 5th 1903

My dear Kate

The only photograph (which I do not like to spare) of Herman's father¹²⁴ is from an oil painting taken in Paris in 1810 — and in giving something of value to each of the family after Herman's death, I gave that to Lottie Hoadley — . . . I have no doubt that you could get a photograph from that, if you wish by writing her — But Herman never thought it a very good portrait — . . .

Affectionately your cousin

Lizzie

ELIZABETH SHAW MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT
LANSING
(*Extract*)

Braeburn,

Jefferson, New Hampshire

August 31st 1903

My dear Cousin Kate

. . . About the photo of Herman's father, I will certainly loan it to you to be copied when I get back to New York where of course it is now — the only condition will be that I have it again promptly, as [it] is the only one I have — it was taken from an oil painting done in Paris in 1810 — but Herman never thought it was a good likeness — . . .

Affectionately your cousin

Lizzie S. M.

¹²⁴ This portrait is reproduced here in the Melville Family Group.

ELIZABETH SHAW MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT
LANSING

(*Extract*)

49 Mt Vernon st

Boston Mass Oct — 5th 1903

Dear Cousin Kate,

. . . We expect to return to New York this week Saturday (10th) and then I will send you the photograph of Herman's father, which you can have copied for your collection — And also the other ones (small ones) that you wish — . . .

Bessie joins me in love — Affectionately your

Cousin Lizzie

ELIZABETH SHAW MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT
LANSING

(*Extract*)

105 East 18th st

New York Oct. 18 — 1930 [*sic* for 1903]

My dear Kate

We came home a week ago yesterday, and I have not forgotten your request about the photograph of Herman's father — but I have been so busy trying to get to rights and in living order that I have not had a moment to attend to it — But I send it to you now to have copied, and will ask you to return it as soon as you have done with it, as it is the only one I have — I send also a carte de visite of Herman, as you wished, but I have not one of myself — . . . Bessie joins me in love and good wishes —

Affectionately your cousin

Lizzie M.

ELIZABETH SHAW MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT
LANSING

(*Extract*)

105 East 18th st

New York Nov. 9 — 1903

Dear Cousin Kate

The photograph came safely, and in answer to your question — about the left hand — what he holds is a seal on the end of a watch fob — one that was his father's — then Gansevoort had it and after his death mother Melville gave it to Herman — and now I have given it to Frank Hoadley as the only male repre-

sentative of the family, who will value it accordingly — I hope he may yet have a son to inherit it — How I wish there was another Herman in the family to whom I could will the old tankard —

Did you want another small photograph of Herman — you know I sent you one — and I have none of myself except one of a cabinet size¹²⁵ which I will send if you wish and will let me know — . . .

Affectionately your

Cousin Lizzie

ELIZABETH SHAW MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT
LANSING

(*Extract*)

105 East 18th st

New York Jan 15, 1904

Dear Cousin Kate

I was agreeably surprised last evening on receiving the box with the ancestral portraits — most excellent copies of the original paintings — and I thank you very much for your kindness in sending them to me — I hope they will long outlive my time and that future generations may value them as I do — . . .

Bessie joins me in love and all good wishes, and again thanking you for your very valuable gift, believe me —

always your affectionate

Cousin Lizzie S. M.

I suppose you received the photographs that you asked for — I sent them at once —

ELIZABETH SHAW MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT
LANSING

(*Extract*)

105 East 18th st

New York Jan 27 — 1904

Dear Cousin Kate,

I have been trying to get some of the missing dates that you asked for, through my brother, but have not succeeded — . . .

The photographs of the grandparents have given us all great pleasure — I have hung them over the old Gansevoort sideboard as a befitting position, and upon which they seem to look down with benignity as upon an old friend — And again I thank you very much for sending them to me — . . .

Affectionately your cousin

Lizzie S. M.

¹²⁵ This cabinet portrait of Mrs. Melville is reproduced on our frontispiece.

ELIZABETH SHAW MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT
LANSING

(*Extract*)

105 East 18th st

New York Feb. 16 — 1904

My dear Kate

Thank you very much for the data of the Gansevoort portraits — they will increase their value and interest for those who come after us . . .

Affectionately your

Cousin Lizzie M.

ELIZABETH SHAW MELVILLE TO CATHERINE GANSEVOORT
LANSING

(*Extract*)

105 East 18th st

New York March 22^d — 1904

Dear Cousin Kate,

The "Frank Melville" the notice of whose death you enclose in your note, is no relation of Herman's family — *And I did* see "Hawthorne and his Circle" with that atrocious portrait — and was so incensed at it that I *did* write (some week ago) to Julian H. asking him to withdraw it from future editions, or let me furnish him with a good one to replace it — but I have had no reply — I wish you would write to him, as a near relative, and say that it is distressing to the whole family, and they would be thankful to have it eliminated — . . .

I also objected to some statements in the text — as for instance Herman making one of his "aimless journeys" abroad and told him that whatever j[o]urneys he *did* make were with a definite purpose — It is exasperating to have such things stated as facts —

The "Times" in its London letter announces that a new edition of Herman's sea tales is in preparation by John Lane — a well know[n] publisher in London — if you see anything about it, please let me know —

About *dates*, I have given you all you asked for, except those of the place and birth of Herman's grandmother, who was Priscilla Scollay — will bear it in mind, and supply them when I can — . . .

Affectionately your cousin

Lizzie M.

DATE DUE

[illegible]

PS 2386 .A57 1929
Melville, Herman, 1819-18
Family correspondence of Herman

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TRENT UNIVERSITY

PS2386 .A57 1929 UTLAS
Melville, Herman, 1819-1891
Family correspondence of Herman
Melville : 1830-1904 ; in the
Gansevoort-Lansing collection

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